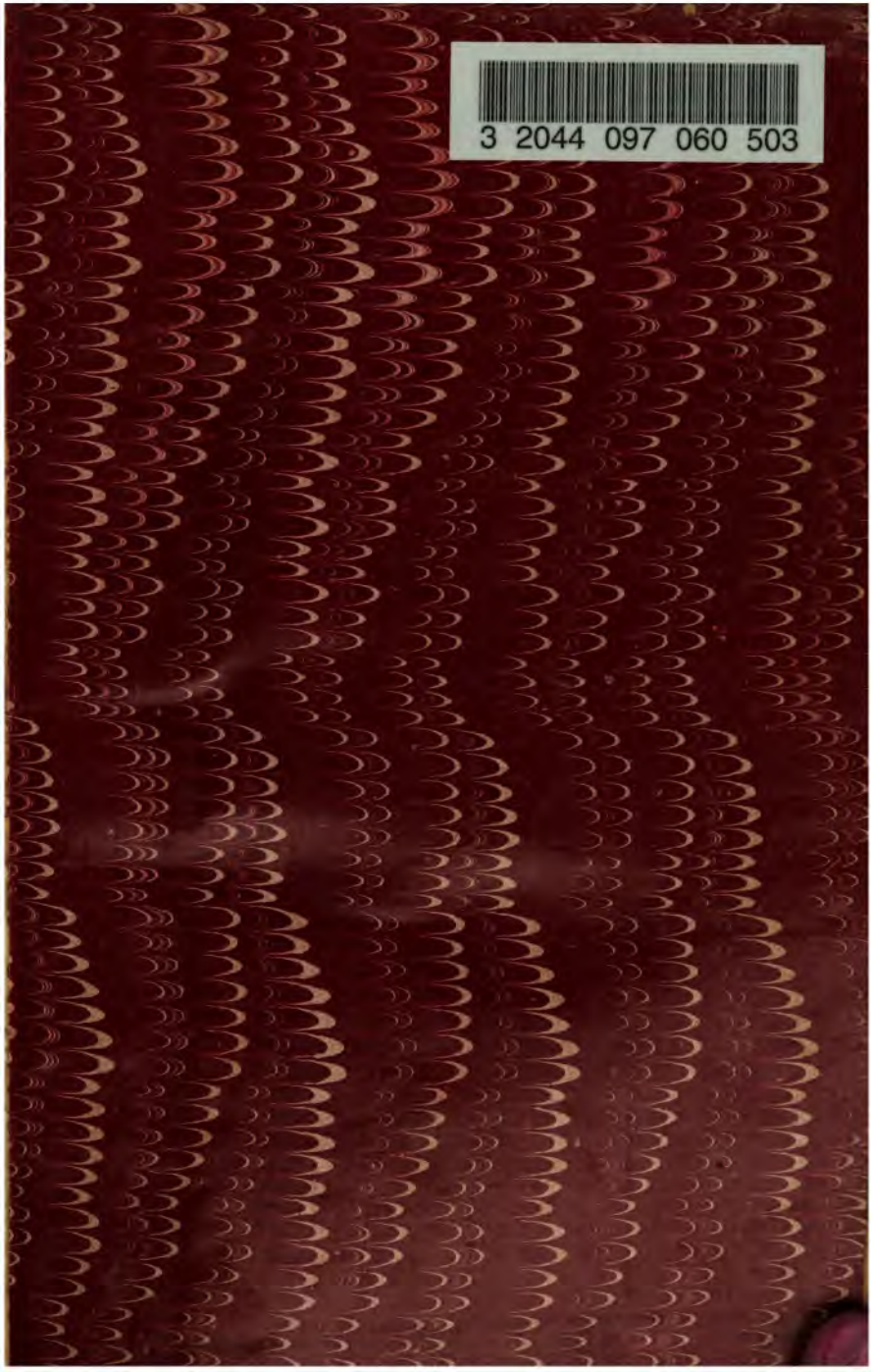

PLAYS

OF

SHAKESPEARE

SELECTED AND PREPARED FOR USE IN

SCHOOLS.

WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES.

BY

—THE REV. HENRY N. HUDSON.—

The grave diggers

NUMBER III.

HAMLET.

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INTRODUCTION TO HAMLET.

"THE Revenge of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, as it was lately acted by the Lord Chamberlain's Servants," was registered at the Stationers' on the 26th of July, 1602. This entry undoubtedly refers to Shakespeare's tragedy, and is the first we hear of it. The tragedy was printed in 1603. It was published again in 1604; and in the title-page of that issue we have the words, "enlarged to almost as much again as it was." This latter edition was reprinted in 1605, and again in 1611; besides an undated quarto, which is commonly referred to 1607, as it was entered at the Stationers' in the Fall of that year. These are all the issues known to have been made before the play reappeared in the folio of 1623. The quartos, all but the first, have a number of highly important passages that are not in the folio; while, on the other hand, the folio has a few, less important, that are wanting in the quartos. It is agreed on all hands that the first issue was piratical. It gives the play but about half as long as the later quartos, and carries in its face abundant evidence of having been greatly marred and disfigured in the making-up. Mr. Dyce says, "It seems certain that in the quarto of 1603 we have Shakespeare's first conception of the play, though with a text mangled and corrupted throughout, and perhaps formed on the notes of some short-hand writer, who had imperfectly taken it down during representation." Nevertheless it is evident that the play was very different then from what it afterwards became. Polonius is there called Corambis, and his man Reynaldo is called Montano. Divers scenes and passages, some of them such as a reporter would be least likely to omit, are wanting altogether. The Queen is represented as concerting and actively co-operating with Hamlet against the King's life; and she has an interview of considerable length with Horatio, who informs her of Hamlet's escape from the ship bound for England, and of his safe return to Denmark; of which scene the later issues have no traces whatever. All this fully ascertains the play to have undergone a thorough recasting from what it was when the copy of 1603 was taken.

A good deal of question has been made as to the time when the tragedy was first written. It is all but certain that the subject was done into a play some years before Shakespeare took it in hand, as we have notices to that effect reaching as far back as 1589. That play, however, is lost; and our notices of it give no clue to the authorship. On the other hand, there appears no good reason for believing that any form of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was in being long before we hear of it as entered at the Stationers', in 1602. The tragedy was partly founded on a work by Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish historian, written as early as 1204, but not printed till 1514. The incidents, as related by him, were borrowed by Belleforest, through whose French version, probably, the tale found its way to the English stage. It was called *The History of Hamblet*. As there told, the story is, both in matter and style, uncouth and barbarous in the last degree; a savage, shocking tale of lust and murder, unredeemed by a single touch of art or fancy in the narrator The scene of the incidents is laid before the introduction of Christianity into Denmark, and when the Danish power held sway in England: further than this the time is not specified. It is hardly needful to add that Shakespeare makes

the persons Christians, clothing them with the sentiments and manners of a much later period than they have in the tale; though he still places the scene at a time when England paid some sort of homage to the Danish crown, which was before the Norman Conquest. Therewithal the Poet uses very great freedom in regard to time. As a late writer observes: "The wars and treaties, the State councils and embassies, the players, the coroner's inquests and Christian burials, the awakened wits of the peasants, the refinements of the courtiers, and the education of the young nobles finished at the German University or the French capital, — all mark a state of advanced and vigorous national life, much like that which existed in Shakespeare's own day in England. Whether such a state of society has ever been actually found in Denmark is not the question; for it is one of the most undoubted rights of the Romantic Drama, that it shall be free from the laws of time and place, though subject ever to the no less real and binding, but very different, laws of the imagination."

We have seen that the *Hamlet* of 1604 was greatly enlarged. The enlargement, however, is mainly in the contemplative and imaginative parts, little being added in the way of action and incident. And in respect of those parts, there is no comparison between the two copies; the difference is literally immense, and of such a kind as to evince a most astonishing growth of intellectual power and resource. In the earlier text, we have little more than a naked though in the main well-ordered and well-knit skeleton, which, in the later, is everywhere replenished and glorified with large, rich volumes of thought and poetry; where all that is incidental and circumstantial is made subordinate to the living energies of mind and soul. So that the enlarged *Hamlet* probably marks the germination of that "thoughtful philosophy," as Hallam calls it, which never after deserted the Poet, though time did indeed abate its excess, and reduce it under his control; whereas it here overflows all bounds, and sweeps onward unchecked.

Schlegel, therefore, might well describe this play as "a tragedy of thought." Such is indeed its character; wherein it stands alone, and this, not only of Shakespeare's dramas, but of all the dramas in being. As for action, the play has but little that can properly be so called. The scenes are indeed well diversified with incident; but the incidents, for the most part, engage the attention chiefly as serving to start and shape the hero's far-reaching trains of reflection, themselves being lost sight of in the wealth of thought and sentiment which they call forth. Nor does any other of the Poet's dramas give so deep an impression of a superhuman power presiding over a war of irregular and opposing forces, and calmly working out its own purpose through the baffled, disjointed, and conflicting purposes of human agents. The very plan of the drama may almost be said to consist in the persons being without plans; for, as Goethe says, "The hero has no plan, but the play itself is full of plan." And however the characters go at cross-aims with each other or themselves, they nevertheless still move true to the author's aim: their confused and broken schemes he uses as the elements of a higher order; and the harshest discords of their plane of thought serve to enrich and deepen the harmonies of his.

Hamlet himself has caused more of perplexity and discussion than any other character in the whole range of art. The charm of his mind and person amounts to an almost universal fascination; and he has been well described as "a concentration of all the interests that belong to humanity." I have learned by experience that one seems

to understand him better after a little study than after a great deal: and that the less one sees into him the more apt one is to think he sees through him; in which respect he is indeed like Nature herself. One man considers Hamlet great, but wicked; another, good, but weak; a third, that he lacks courage, and dare not act; a fourth, that he has too much intellect for his will, and so reflects away the time of action: some conclude his madness half genuine; others, that it is wholly feigned. Doubtless there are facts in the delineation which, considered by themselves, would sustain any one of these views; but none of them seems reconcilable with all the facts taken together. Yet, notwithstanding this diversity of opinions, all agree in thinking of Hamlet as an actual person. It is easy to invest with plausibility almost any theory respecting him, but very hard to make any theory comprehend the whole subject; and while all are impressed with the truth of the character, no one is satisfied with another's explanation of it. The question is, Why such unanimity as to his being a man, and at the same time such diversity as to what sort of a man he is?

But the question of questions about Hamlet has reference to his "antic disposition." Is his madness real or feigned, or partly the one, partly the other? This question cannot be discussed at any length here; but it would hardly be right to pass it without some reference to the opinions of those who probably have the best claim to be heard on the subject. Of late years, the medical men, in particular those of them whose specialty lies in the treatment of mental disease, have turned their attention a good deal to Shakespeare's delineations of insanity. Dr. Conolly, of England, Dr. Ray, late of Providence, and Dr. Kellogg, of Utica, have all published well-considered essays on the subject. They have brought the aids of a large science and a ripe experience to the discussion; and I cannot but think their judgment entitled to great deference. Dr. Ray, referring to the literary critics, says: "These persons embrace the popular error of regarding madness as but another name for confusion and violence, overlooking the daily fact that it is compatible with some of the ripest and richest manifestations of intellect. In regard to this point, it is enough to state it as a scientific fact, that Hamlet's mental condition furnishes, in abundance, the pathological and psychological symptoms of insanity in wonderful harmony and consistency." Dr. Kellogg fully concurs with Dr. Ray. "There are," says he, "cases of melancholic madness, of a delicate shade, in which the reasoning faculties, the intellect proper, so far from being overcome or even disordered, are rendered more active and vigorous; while the will, the moral feelings, the sentiments and affections, seem alone to suffer from the stroke of disease. Such a case Shakespeare has given us in the character of Hamlet, with a fidelity to nature which continues more and more to excite our wonder and astonishment, as our knowledge of this intricate subject advances." I must also quote a brief passage from Dr. Conolly's *Study of Hamlet*, which draws somewhat more definitely into the particulars of the case. After referring to the soliloquy, "Oh, that this too-too solid flesh would melt," &c., the writer goes on as follows: "This soliloquy, the first full expression we have of Hamlet's actual feelings, deserves particular consideration from those who feel any interest in the question of his real state of mind throughout the play. It seems distinctly to reveal both his mental constitution and the already existing disturbance of his feelings, amounting to a predisposition to actual unsoundness. His mind is morbidly and constantly occupied with one set of thoughts: the indecorous marriage of his uncle with his mother had usurped all his

attention. He is even at this time far advanced into that miserable condition which he describes much later: he has lost all his mirth; he is weary of all the uses of the world; he is weary of life. Of his father's ghost he has at this time heard nothing; of his father's murder no suspicion has ever been dreamed of by him. No thought of feigning melancholy can have entered his mind; but he is even now most heavily shaken and discomposed, — indeed, so violently, that his reason, although not dethroned, is certainly well-nigh deranged."

Taking these authorities, together with the belief of all the persons in the play except the King, — whose doubts spring from his own guilt, — and also with the solemn declaration of Hamlet himself to Laertes near the close, I must be excused for regarding them as decisive of the question. In plain terms, Hamlet is mad: deranged not indeed in all his faculties, nor perhaps in any of them continuously; that is, the derangement is partial and occasional; paroxysms of wildness and fury alternating with intervals of serenity and composure.

As to the general idea of Hamlet's character, I probably cannot better serve the purpose of this Introduction than by quoting the views of Goethe and Coleridge; these two best representing the different sets of opinions commonly held on the subject. "To me it is clear," says Goethe, "that Shakespeare meant in the present case to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it. In this view the whole piece seems to me composed. There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers; the roots expand, the jar is shivered. A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear, and must not cast away. All duties are holy for him; the present is too hard. Impossibilities have been required of him, — not in themselves impossibilities, but such for him. He winds and turns and torments himself; he advances and recoils; is ever put in mind, ever puts himself in mind; at last does all but lose his purpose from his thoughts; yet still without recovering his peace of mind." Coleridge's criticism, which is regarded by very many as altogether the best that has ever been given of the character, is as follows: "In Hamlet, Shakespeare seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses, and our meditation on the workings of our minds, — an *equilibrium* between the real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet, this balance is disturbed: his thoughts and the images of his fancy are far more vivid than his actual perceptions; and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the *medium* of his contemplations, acquire as they pass a form and a colour not naturally their own. Hence we see a great, an almost enormous intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakespeare places in circumstances under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment: Hamlet is brave, and careless of death; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve."

Thus much for views of the subject more or less at variance with my own. The passage from Coleridge, especially, viewing the character, as it does, from within, is worthy of attentive study; and the large currency it has attained argues a good deal of truth in it. As for my own views of the subject, the fairest and fullest expression of them that I have met with, on the whole, is the following, from the London *Quarterly Review*, vol. lxxix:

"The universality of Shakespeare's genius is in some sort reflected in Hamlet. He has a mind wise and witty, abstract and practical; the utmost reach of philosophical contemplation is mingled with the most penetrating sagacity in the affairs of life; playful jest, biting satire, sparkling repartee, with the darkest and deepest thoughts that can agitate man. He exercises all his various faculties with surprising readiness. He divines, with the rapidity of lightning, the nature and motives of those who are brought into contact with him; fits in a moment his bearing and retorts to their individual peculiarities; is equally at home, whether he is mocking Polonius with hidden raillery, or dissipating Ophelia's dream of love, or crushing the sponges with sarcasm and invective, or talking euphuism with Osric, and satirizing while he talks it; whether he is uttering wise maxims, or welcoming the players with facetious graciousness; probing the inmost souls of others, or sounding the mysteries of his own. His philosophy stands out conspicuous among the brilliant faculties which contend for the mastery. It is the quality which gives weight and dignity to the rest. It intermingles with all his actions. He traces the most trifling incidents up to their general laws. His natural disposition is to lose himself in contemplation. He goes thinking out of the world. The commonest ideas that pass through his mind are invested with a wonderful freshness and originality. His meditations in the churchyard are on the trite notion that all ambition leads but to the grave. But what condensation, what variety, what picturesqueness, what intense, unmitigated gloom! It is the finest sermon ever preached against the vanities of life.

"So far, we imagine, all are agreed. But the motives which induce Hamlet to defer his revenge are still, and perhaps will ever remain, debatable ground. The favourite doctrine of late is, that the thinking part of Hamlet predominated over the active; that he was as weak and vacillating in performance as he was great in speculation. If this theory were borne out by his general conduct, it would no doubt amply account for his procrastination; but there is nothing to countenance, and much to refute, the idea. Shakespeare has endowed him with a vast energy of will. There could be no sterner resolve than to abandon every purpose of existence, that he might devote himself unfettered to his revenge; nor was ever resolution better observed. He breaks through his passion for Ophelia, and keeps it down, under the most trying circumstances, with such inflexible firmness, that an eloquent critic has seriously questioned whether his attachment was real. The determination of his character appears again at the death of Polonius. An indecisive mind would have been shocked, if not terrified, at the deed. Hamlet dismisses him with a few contemptuous words, as a man would brush away a fly. He talks with even greater indifference of Rosencrantz and Guilderstern, whom he sends 'to sudden death, not shriving-time allowed.' He has on these, and indeed on all occasions, a short and absolute way which only belongs to resolute souls. The features developed in his very hesitation to kill the King are inconsistent with the notion that his hand refuses to perform what his head contrives. He is always trying to persuade himself into a conviction that it is his duty, instead of seeking for evasions. He wants, it is clear, neither will nor nerve to strike the blow. There is, perhaps, but one supposition that will satisfy all the phenomena. His uncle, after all, is his King; he is the brother of his father, and the husband of his mother; and it was inevitable that he should shrink, in his cooler moments, from becoming his assassin. His hatred to his uncle, who had disgraced his family and disappointed his ambition, gives him personal inducements to revenge.

which further blunts his purpose by leading him to doubt the purity of his motives. The admonition of the Ghost to him is, not to taint his mind in the prosecution of his end; and no sooner has the Ghost vanished, than Hamlet, invoking the aid of supernatural powers, exclaims, 'O all you host of Heaven! O Earth! What else? and shall I couple Hell? O fie!' But the Hell, whose support he rejects, is for ever returning to his mind and startling his conscience. It is this that makes him wish for the confirmation of the play, for evil spirits may have abused him. It is this which begets the apathy he terms oblivion, for inaction affords relief to doubt. It is this which produces his inconsistencies; for conscience calls him different ways, and when he obeys in one direction he is haunted by the feeling that he should have gone in the other. If he contemplates the performance of a deed which looks outwardly more like murder than judicial retribution, he trembles lest, after all, he should be perpetrating an unnatural crime; or if, on the other hand, he turns to view his uncle's misdeeds, he fancies there is more of cowardly scrupulosity than justice in his backwardness, and he abounds in self-reproaches at the weakness of his hesitation. And thus he might for ever have halted between two opinions, if the King himself, by filling up the measure of his iniquities, had not swept away his scruples."

This play is surpassingly rich both in variety and completeness of characteristic delineation. For Hamlet's character, though it fills and may almost be said to form the whole drama, is notwithstanding of such a nature as rather to invite the others into free development than to repress them. Accordingly all the persons, from the hero down to the Grave-diggers, are rounded out, each in perfect distinctness of individuality. The King, the Queen, Horatio, Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, and Osric, all are traced with such punctual and firm-handed portraiture, that we grow to a sort of personal acquaintance with them. Nor are these minor characters without plenty of salient points for analytic discourse: in particular, Ophelia is so lovely in herself, and so moving in the inexpressible pathos of her part, that it is not easy to pass her by in silence; but so much space has necessarily been devoted to Hamlet, that this Introduction is already in danger of overdrawing its length. Besides, the other characters, except Polonius, are, for the most part, so clear and simple in their personal complexion and their springs of action, as to offer little or no perplexity to average students of the Poet. I will therefore dismiss the theme with Dr. Johnson's capital remarks on the old politician:

"Polonius is a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observation, confident in his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining into dotage. His mode of oratory is truly represented as designed to ridicule the practice of those times, — of those prefaces that made no introduction, and of method that embarrassed rather than explained. This part of his character is accidental, the rest is natural. Such a man is positive and confident, because he knows that his mind was once strong, but knows not that it has become weak. Such a man excels in general principles, but fails in the particular application. He is knowing in retrospect, and ignorant in foresight. While he depends upon his memory, and can draw from his repositories of knowledge, he utters weighty sentences, and gives useful counsel; but, as the mind in its enfeebled state cannot be kept long busy and intent, the old man is subject to sudden dereliction of his faculties; he loses the order of his ideas, and entangles himself in his own thoughts, till he recovers the leading principle, and falls again into his former train. This idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom will solve all the phenomena of the character of Polonius."

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark.
HAMLET, his Nephew, Son of the former King.
POLONIUS, Lord Chamberlain.
HORATIO, Friend to Hamlet.
LAERTES, Son of Polonius.
VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, } Courtiers.
OSRIC, a Courtier.
Another Courtier.
A Priest.
MARCELLUS, BERNARDO, } Officers.
FRANCISCO, a Soldier.
REYNALDO, Servant to Polonius.
A Captain. Ambassadors.
The Ghost of Hamlet's Father.
FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway.
Two Grave-diggers.
GERTRUDE, Mother of Hamlet, and Queen.
OPHELIA, Daughter of Polonius.

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Players, Sailors, Messengers, and Attendants.

SCENE, Elsinore.

ACT I. SCENE I. *Elsinore. A Platform before the Castle.*

FRANCISCO *on his Post. Enter to him* BERNARDO.

Ber. WHO'S there?
Fran. Nay, answer me:[1] stand, and unfold yourself.
Ber. Long live the King!
Fran. Bernardo?
Ber. He.
Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.
Ber. 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.
Fran. For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.
Ber. Have you had quiet guard?
Fran. Not a mouse stirring.
Ber. Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch,[2] bid them make haste.
Fran. I think I hear them. — Stand, ho! Who is there?

[1] Answer *me*, as I have the right to challenge *you*. Bernardo then gives in answer the watch-word, "Long live the king!"

[2] *Rivals* are associates or partners. A brook, rivulet, or river, *rivus*, being a natural boundary between different proprietors, was owned by them in common; that is, they were *partners* in the right and use of it. From the strifes thus engendered, the *partners* came to be *contenders*: hence the ordinary sense of *rival*.

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

Hor. Friends to this ground.
Mar. And liegemen to the Dane.
Fran. Give you good night.
Mar. O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath reliev'd you?
Fran. Bernardo has my place.
Give you good night.[3] [*Exit.*
Mar. Holla! Bernardo!
Ber. Say,—
What, is Horatio there?
Hor. A piece of him.
Ber. Welcome, Horatio:—welcome, good Marcellus.
Hor. What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?
Ber. I have seen nothing.
Mar. Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us:
Therefore I have intreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night;
That, if again this apparition come,[4]
He may approve our eyes,[5] and speak to it.
Hor. Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.
Ber. Sit down awhile;
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we two nights have seen.
Hor. Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.
Ber. Last night of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole[6]
Had made his course t' illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one,—
Mar. Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!

[3] This salutation is an abbreviated form of, "May God give you a good night;" which has been still further abbreviated in the phrase, "Good night."

[4] There is a temperate scepticism, well befitting a scholar, in Horatio's "has this *thing* appeared again to-night." *Thing* is the most general and indefinite substantive in the language. Observe the gradual approach to what is more and more definite. "Dreaded sight" cuts off a large part of the indefiniteness, and "this apparition" is a further advance to the particular. The matter is aptly ordered for what Coleridge calls "*credibilizing* effect."

[5] That is, *make good* our vision, or *prove* our eyes to be *true*. *Approve* was often thus used in the sense of *confirm*.

[6] Of course the *polar star*, or north star, is meant, which appears to stand still, while the other stars in its neighborhood seem to revolve around it.—Note the use of *his* for *its*.

Enter the Ghost.

Ber. In the same figure, like the King that's dead.
Mar. Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.[7]
Ber. Looks it not like the King? mark it, Horatio.
Hor. Most like: — it harrows me with fear and wonder.[8]
Ber. It would be spoke to.
Mar. Question it, Horatio.
Hor. What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the Majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? by Heaven I charge thee, speak!
Mar. It is offended.
Ber. See, it stalks away!
Hor. Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!
[*Exit Ghost.*
Mar. 'Tis gone, and will not answer.
Ber. How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on't?
Hor. Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.
Mar. Is it not like the King?
Hor. As thou art to thyself:
Such was the very armour he had on
When he th' ambitious Norway combated;
So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.[9]
'Tis strange.
Mar. Thus, twice before, and jump at this dead hour,[10]
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.
Hor. In what particular thought to work I know not;
But in the gross and scope of mine opinion

[7] It was believed that a supernatural being could only be spoken to with effect by persons of learning; exorcisms being usually practised by the clergy in Latin. So, in *The Night Walker* of Beaumont and Fletcher: "Let's call the butler up, for he speaks Latin, and that will daunt the Devil."

[8] To *harrow* is to *distress*, to *vex*, to *disturb*. To *harry* and to *harass* have the same origin. Milton has the word in *Comus*: "Amaz'd I stood, *harrow'd* with grief and fear." — "*Question* it," in the next line, is the reading of the folio; other old copies have "*Speak to* it."

[9] *Polacks* was used for *Polanders* in Shakespeare's time. *Sledded* is *sledged*; on a *sled* or *sleigh*. — *Parle*, in the preceding line, is the same as *parley*.

[10] So all the quartos. The folio reads *just*. *Jump* and *just* were synonymous in the time of Shakespeare. So in Chapman's *May Day*, 1611: "Your appointment was *jumpe* at three with me."

This bodes some strange eruption to our State.[11]
Mar. Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,
Why this same strict and most observant watch
So nightly toils the subject of the land;[12]
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
And foreign mart for implements of war;
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task[13]
Does not divide the Sunday from the week;
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day:
Who is't that can inform me?
Hor. That can I;
At least, the whisper goes so. Our last King,
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway
(Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride)
Dar'd to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet —
For so this side of our known world esteem'd him —
Did slay this Fortinbras; who, by a seal'd compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,[14]
Did forfeit with his life all those his lands
Which he stood seiz'd on[15] to the conqueror:
Against the which, a moiety competent
Was gaged by our King;[16] which had return'd
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same cov'nant,
And carriage of the articles' design,[17]
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,

[11] Horatio means that, in a general interpretation of the matter, this foreshadows some great evil or disaster to the State; though he cannot conceive in what particular shape the evil is to come.

[12] The Poet sometimes uses an adjective in the singular with the sense of the plural substantive; as here *subject* for *subjects*. See page 431, note 1. — *Toils* is here a transitive verb. — *Mart*, in the next line, is *trade*.

[13] *Impress* here means pressing or forcing of men into the service. — *Divide*, next line, is *distinguish*.

[14] *Heraldry* refers to the forms and rules of procedure observed in private duels; "the code of honour," as it is called.

[15] This is the old legal phrase, still in use, for *held possession of*, or *was the rightful owner of*. *On* and *of* were used indifferently in such cases.

[16] *Moiety competent* is *equivalent portion*. The proper meaning of *moiety* is *half*; so that the sense here is, half of the entire value put in pledge on both sides. — *Gaged* is *pledged*. Observe that, in the text as here printed, (and it is so in the old copies) the ending *ed*, in verbs and participles, always makes a distinct syllable by itself, save when it is preceded by *i*, in such words as *applied*. When it should coalesce with the preceding syllable, it is uniformly printed with the apostrophe as in *assur'd*.

[17] The folio has *cov'nant*; the quartos, *co-mart*, which may mean the same thing, but no other such use of the word is known. — *Carriage of the articles' design* appears to mean *performance* or *carrying-out of the design of the articles*.

Of unimproved mettle hot and full,[18]
Hath in the skirts of Norway, here and there,
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutes,
For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't:[19] which is no other
(As it doth well appear unto our State)
But to recover of us, by strong hand
And terms compulsative, those 'foresaid lands
So by his father lost. And this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,
The source of this our watch, and the chief head
Of this post-haste and romage in the land.[20]

Ber. I think it be no other but e'en so:
Well may it sort,[21] that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch; so like the King
That was and is the question of these wars.

Hor. A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,[22]
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:

. . . . . .

As, stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the Sun;[23] and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.[24]
And even the like precurse of fierce events —
As harbingers preceding still the fates,
And prologue to the omen coming on[25] —

[18] Of *unimpeached* or *unquestioned* courage. To *improve* anciently signified to *impeach*, to *impugn*. Numerous instances of *improve* in this sense may be found in the writings of Shakespeare's time. — *Shark'd* is *snapped* up or *taken* up hastily. "*Scroccare* is properly to do any thing at another man's cost, *to shark or shift for any thing*. *Scroccolone*, a cunning shifter or *sharker* for any thing in time of need, namely *for victuals*."

[19] *Stomach* was often used in the sense of *courage*, or appetite for danger or for fighting. So, in *Julius Cæsar*, v. 1; "If you dare fight to-day, come to the field; if not, when you have *stomachs*." — The quartos have *landless* instead of *lawless*.

[20] *Romage*, now spelt *rummage*, is used for ransacking, or making a thorough search.

[21] *Sort* is *fit*, *suit*, or *agree*: often so used.

[22] *Palmy* is *victorious*; the *Palm* being the emblem of victory.

[23] This speech down to "*Re-enter the Ghost*," is wanting in the folio, and the quartos have some evident corruption here, which no editorial ingenuity seems likely to overcome. Probably the best way is to indicate the loss of a line by marking an *hiatus* in the text.

[24] The "moist star" is the Moon; probably so called either from the dews that attend her shining, or from her influence over the waters of the sea. — *Doomsday* is the old word for *day of judgment*.

[25] *Omen* is here put for *portentous event*. The use of the word is classical.

Have Heaven and Earth together demonstrated
Unto our climature and countrymen. —
But, soft! behold! lo, where it comes again!

Re-enter the Ghost.

I'll cross it, though it blast me.[26] — Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
Speak to me:
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which happily foreknowing may avoid,[27]
O, speak!
Or, if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of Earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
[*Cock crows.*
Speak of it: — stay, and speak! — Stop it, Marcellus.

Mar. Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

Hor. Do, if it will not stand.

Ber. 'Tis here!

Hor. 'Tis here!

Mar. 'Tis gone! [*Exit Ghost.*

We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

Ber. It was about to speak when the cock crew.

Hor. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,[28]
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day; and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
Th' extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine:[29] and of the truth herein

[26] It was believed that a person crossing the path of a spectre became subject to its malignant influence. Lodge's *Illustrations of English History*, speaking of Ferdinand, Earl of Derby, who died by witchcraft, as was supposed, in 1594, has the following: "On Friday there appeared a tall man, *who twice crossed him* swiftly; and when the earl came to the place where he saw this man, he fell sick."

[27] Which *happy* or *fortunate foreknowledge* may avoid: a participle and adverb used with the sense of a substantive and adjective. — The structure of this solemn appeal is almost identical with that of a very different strain in *As You Like It*, ii. 4.

[28] So the quartos; the folio has *day* instead of *morn*.

[29] *Extravagant* is *extra-vagans*, wandering about, going beyond bounds. *Erring* is *erraticus*, straying or roving up and down.

This present object made probation.
Mar. It faded on the crowing of the cock.[80]
Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes,[81] nor witch hath power to charm;
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.
Hor. So have I heard, and do in part believe it.
But, look, the Morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill:
Break we our watch up; and, by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?[82]
Mar. Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know
Where we shall find him most conveniently. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *The Same. A room of State in the Castle.*

Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, *Lords, and Attendants.*

King. Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe;
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature,
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our Queen,
Th' imperial jointress of this warlike State,[1]

[80] This is a very ancient superstition. There is a Hymn of Prudentius, and another of St. Ambrose, in which it is mentioned; and there are some lines in the latter very much resembling Horatio's speech.

[81] *Take* was used for *blast, infect,* or *smite with disease.* So, in *King Lear*, ii. 4: "Strike her young bones, you *taking* airs, with lameness." — *Gracious*, in *Shakespeare*, sometimes means *full of grace* or of the *Divine favour.*

[82] These last three speeches are admirably conceived. The speakers are in a highly kindled state: when the Ghost vanishes, their terror presently subsides into an inspiration of the finest quality, and their intense excitement, as it passes off, blazes up in a subdued and pious rapture of poetry.

[1] *Jointress* is the same as *heiress.* The Poet herein follows the history, which represents the former King to have come to the throne by marriage; so that whatever of hereditary claim Hamlet has to the crown is in right of his mother.

Have we, as 'twere, with a defeated joy,—
With one auspicious, and one dropping eye;[2]
With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,—
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along: For all our thanks.[3]
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking, by our late dear brother's death,
Our State to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleagued with the dream of his advantage,
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bands of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting:
Thus much the business is: We have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,—
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose,—to suppress
His further gait herein;[4] in that the levies,
The lists, and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject.—And we here despatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway;
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the King, more than the scope
Of these dilated articles allow.[5]
Farewell; and let your haste commend your duty.

Cor. Vol. In that and all things will we show our duty.

King. We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.—

[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

[2] The same thought occurs in *The Winter's Tale*, v. 2: "She had *one eye declin'd* for the loss of her husband, *another elevated* that the oracle was fulfill'd." There is an old proverbial phrase, "To laugh with one eye, and cry with the other."

[3] Note the strained, elaborate, and antithetic style of the King's speech thus far. As he is there shamming and playing the hypocrite, he naturally tries how finely he can word it. In what follows, he speaks like a man, his mind moving with simplicity and earnestness as soon as he comes to plain matters of business.

[4] *Gait* here signifies *course, progress*. *Gait* for road, way, path, is still in use.

[5] The scope of these articles when dilated or explained in full. Such elliptical expressions are common with the Poet, from his having more thought than space. The rules of modern grammar would require *allows* instead of *allow*; but in old writers, when the noun and the verb have a genitive intervening, it is very common for the verb to take the number of the genitive.

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: What would'st thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.[6]
What would'st thou have, Laertes?

Laer. Dread my lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation;
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

King. Have you your father's leave? — What says Polonius?

Pol. He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave,
By laboursome petition; and, at last,
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

King. Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will![7] —
But now my cousin Hamlet, and my son, —

Ham. [*Aside.*] A little more than kin, and less than kind.[8]

King. — How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Ham. Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.[9]

Queen. Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not, for ever, with thy vailed lids[10]
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:

[6] The various parts of the body enumerated are not more *allied, more necessary* to each other, than the king of Denmark is bound to your father to do him service.

[7] Take an auspicious hour, Laertes; be your time your own, and thy best virtues guide thee in spending of it at thy will.

[8] The King is "a little more than kin" to Hamlet, because, in being at once his uncle and his father he is *twice* kin. And he is "less than kind," because his incestuous marriage, as Hamlet views it, is *unnatural* or *out of nature*. The Poet repeatedly uses *kind* in that sense. See page 80, note 4.

[9] A sarcastic quibble is probably intended here between *sun* and *son*. Hamlet does not like to be called son by that man. And perhaps there is the further meaning implied, that he finds too much sunshine of jollity in the Court, considering what has lately happened. While he is all sadness within, around him all "goes merry as a marriage bell."

[10] With downcast eyes. To *vail* was to *lower* or *let fall*. — The folio has *nightly* instead of *nighted*.

Thou know'st 'tis common; all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.
Ham. Ay, Madam, it is common.
Queen. If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?
Ham. Seems, Madam! nay, it is; I know not *seems.*
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly: these, indeed, seem,
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.
King. 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father:
But you must know your father lost a father;
That father lost, lost his; and the survivor bound,
In filial obligation, for some term
To do obsequious sorrow.[11] But to persevere
In obstinate condolement, is a course
Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief:
It shows a will most incorrect to Heaven;[12]
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd:
For what we know must be, and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we, in our peevish opposition,
Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to Heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to Nature,
To reason most absurd; whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died to-day,
This must be so. We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe,[13] and think of us
As of a father: for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne;
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son,

[11] The Poet sometimes uses *obsequious* as having the sense of *obsequies.*
[12] *Incorrect* is here used, apparently, in the sense of *incorrigible.*
[13] *Unprevailing* was used in the sense of *unavailing* as late as Dryden's time.

Do I impart toward you.[14] For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,[15]
It is most retrograde to our desire;
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

Queen. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

Ham. I shall in all my best obey you, Madam.

King. Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:
Be as ourself in Denmark. — Madam, come;
This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell;
And the King's rouse the heavens shall bruit again,[16]
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

[*Flourish. Exeunt all but* HAMLET

Ham. O, that this too-too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew![17]
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on 't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.[18] That it should come to this!
But two months dead! — nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr:[19] so loving to my mother,

[14] *Impart towards you* is plainly equivalent here to *bestow upon you.* I do not remember another instance of *impart* so used. See, however, *St. Luke* iii. 11.

[15] *School* was applied to places not only of academical, but also of professional study; and in the olden time men were wont to spend their whole lives in such cloistered retirements of learning. So that we need not suppose Hamlet was "going back to school" as an undergraduate. See page 94, note 18. — Certain events of the Reformation had made the University of Wittenberg well known in England in Shakespeare's time.

[16] A *rouse* was a deep draught to one's health, wherein it was the custom to empty the cup or goblet. Its meaning, and probably its origin, was the same as *carouse.* To *bruit* is to *noise;* used with *again*, the same as *echo* or *reverberate.*

[17] To *resolve* had anciently the same meaning as to *dissolve.*

[18] *Merely* is here used in one of the Latin senses of *mere; wholly, entirely.* — Observe how, in this speech, Hamlet's brooding melancholy leads him to take a morbid pleasure in making things worse than they are.

[19] *Hyperion*, which literally means *sublimity*, was one of the names of Apollo, the most beautiful of all the gods, and much celebrated in classic poetry for his golden locks.

That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly.[20] Heaven and Earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month, —
Let me not think on 't; — Frailty, thy name is woman! —
A little month; or ere those shoes were old,
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears;[21] — why, she, even she —
O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,[22]
Would have mourn'd longer — married with my uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules: within a month;
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,[23]
She married. — O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to, good:
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

Enter HORATIO, BERNARDO, *and* MARCELLUS.

Hor. Hail to your lordship!
Ham. I 'm glad to see you well:
Horatio, — or I do forget myself.
Hor. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.
Ham. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you.[24]
And what make you from Wittenberg,[25] Horatio? —
Marcellus?
Mar. My good lord, —
Ham. I 'm very glad to see you. — [*To* BER.] Good even, sir.[26] —
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

[20] *Beteem* is an old word for *permit* or *suffer*.
[21] Niobe was the wife of Amphion, King of Thebes. As she had twelve children, she went to crowing one day over Latona, who had only two, Apollo and Diana. In return for this, all her twelve were slain by Latona's two; and Jupiter, in pity of her sorrow, transformed her into a rock, from which her tears issued in a perennial stream.
[22] *Discourse of reason*, in old philosophical language, is *rational* discourse, or *discursive* reason; the faculty of pursuing a train of thought, or of passing from thought to thought in the way of inference or conclusion.
[23] Shakespeare has *leave* repeatedly in the sense of *leave off*, or *cease*. *Flushing* is the redness of the eyes caused by what the Poet elsewhere calls "eye-offending brine."
[24] As if he had said, — No, not my poor servant: we are *friends*; that is the style I will exchange with you.
[25] "What *make* you" is old language for what *do* you. See page 42, note 1.
[26] The words, *Good even, sir*, are evidently addressed to Bernardo, whom Hamlet has not before known; but as he now meets him in company with

Hor. A truant disposition, good my lord.
Ham. I would not hear your enemy say so;[27]
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.
Hor. My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
Ham. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
Hor. Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.
Ham. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral bak'd meats[28]
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in Heaven[29]
Or ever I had seen that day,[30] Horatio!—
My father,—methinks, I see my father.
Hor. O, where, my lord?
Ham. In my mind's eye, Horatio.
Hor. I saw him once; he was a goodly king.
Ham. He was a man, take him for all in all,[31]
I shall not look upon his like again.
Hor. My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
Ham. Saw who?
Hor. My lord, the King your father.
Ham. The King my father!
Hor. Season your admiration for a while[32]
With an attent ear, till I may deliver,
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.
Ham. For God's love, let me hear.

old acquaintances, like a true gentleman, as he is, he gives him a salutation of kindness. Some editors have changed *even* to *morning*, because Marcellus has said before of Hamlet,—"I this *morning* know where we shall find him." It needs but be remembered that *good even* was the common salutation after noon.

[27] So the quartos; the folio reads *have* instead of *hear*.

[28] Scott, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, has made the readers of romance familiar with the old custom of "funeral bak'd meats," which was kept up in Scotland till a recent period.—*Thrift* means *economy*: all was done merely to save cost.

[29] In Shakespeare's time *dearest* was applied to any person or thing that excites the liveliest interest, whether of love or hate. See page 237, note 6.

[30] The use of *or ever* for *before* occurs repeatedly in the Bible. Thus, in *Daniel* vi. 24: "And the lions brake all their bones in pieces *or ever* they came at the bottom of the den."

[31] Some would read this, "He was a man: take him for all in all," laying marked stress on *man*, as if it were meant to intimate a correction of Horatio's "goodly *king*." There is no likelihood that the Poet had any such thought, as there is no reason why he should have had.

[32] *Admiration* is here used in its Latin sense of *wonder*.—*Season* is *qualify* or *temper*.—Of course, *attent* is for *attentive*.

Hor. Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead vast and middle of the night,[33]
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,
Arm'd at all points, exactly, cap-à-pé,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walk'd
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,[34]
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
And I with them the third night kept the watch;
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes. I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.

Ham. But where was this?

Mar. My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.

Ham. Did you not speak to it?

Hor. My lord, I did,
But answer made it none; yet once methought
It lifted up its head,[35] and did address
Itself to motion, like as it would speak:
But even then the morning cock crew loud,
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,
And vanish'd from our sight.

Ham. 'Tis very strange.

Hor. As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true;
And we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.

Ham. Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch to-night?

Mar. Ber. We do, my lord.

Ham. Arm'd, say you?

Mar. Ber. Arm'd, my lord.

[33] So the quarto of 1603; the other old copies have *vast* and *waste* instead of *vast*. Modern editions have differed whether it should be *waste* or *waist*, the latter meaning *middle*. I have no doubt that *vast* is the right word. It means *void* or *vacancy*.

[34] So all the quartos: the folio has *bestill'd* instead of *distill'd*. To *distill* is to fall in drops, to melt; so that *distill'd* is a very natural and fit expression for the cold sweat caused by intense fear. "The *act* of fear" is the *action* or the *effect* of fear.

[35] The old copies have "*it* head." So, again, in v. 1, of this play: "Fordo *it* own life." The point is rather curious as showing the Poet's reluctance to use *its*, which was then a candidate for admission into the language. He has *it* used possessively in some fourteen other places. See page 488, note 3.

Ham. From top to toe?
Mar. Ber. My lord, from head to foot.
Ham. Then, saw you not his face?
Hor. O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.[86]
Ham. What, look'd he frowningly?
Hor. A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
Ham. Pale, or red?
Hor. Nay, very pale.
Ham. And fix'd his eyes upon you?
Hor. Most constantly.
Ham. I would I had been there.
Hor. It would have much amaz'd you.
Ham. Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?
Hor. While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.
Mar. Ber. Longer, longer.
Hor. Not when I saw't.
Ham. His beard was grizzl'd? — no?
Hor. It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silver'd.
Ham. I'll watch to-night; perchance 'twill walk again.
Hor. I warrant it will.
Ham. If it assume my noble father's person,
I'll speak to it, though Hell itself should gape,
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still;
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue:
I will requite your loves. So, fare ye well:
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I'll visit you.
All. Our duties to your Honour.
Ham. Your loves, as mine to you: Farewell. —
[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET
My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;
I doubt some foul play:[87] would the night were come!
Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the Earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.
[*Exit.*

[86] The beaver was a moveable part of the helmet, which could be drawn down over the face, or pushed up over the forehead.
[87] The Poet has *doubt* repeatedly in the sense of *fear*, or of *suspect*.

SCENE III. *The Same. A Room in* POLONIUS *House.*

Enter LAERTES *and* OPHELIA.

Laer. My necessaries are embark'd; farewell:
And, sister, as the winds give benefit,
And convoy is assistant,[1] do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.
Oph. Do you doubt that?
Laer. For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood;
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.[2]
Oph. No more but so?
Laer. Think it no more:
For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk;[3] but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal.[4] Perhaps he loves you now;
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch[5]
The virtue of his will: but you must fear;
His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own,
For he himself is subject to his birth:[6]
He may not, as unvalu'd persons do,
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The safety and the health of the whole State;[7]
And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head. Then, if he says he loves you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it,
As he in his particular act and place[8]

[1] *Convoy* is used for *conveyance*. Communication with France being by sea, of course there needed both a ship to carry letters, and a wind to drive the ship.

[2] This scene must be regarded as one of Shakespeare's lyric movements in the play, and the skill with which it is interwoven with the dramatic parts is peculiarly an excellence with our Poet. *You experience the sensation of a pause, without the sense of a stop.* — COLERIDGE.

[3] *Thews* is an old word for *sinews* or *muscles*. See page 447, note 13.

[4] The idea is, that Hamlet's love is but a youthful fancy which, as his mind comes to maturity, he will outgrow. The passage would seem to infer that the Prince is not so old as he is elsewhere represented to be.

[5] *Cautel* is a debauched relation of *caution*, and means *fraud* or *deceit*. See page 453, note 21.

[6] Subject to the *conditions* which his birth entails upon him.

[7] The folio has *sanctity* instead of *safety*. The quartos have *safety*, but lack the article *the* before *health*. It is supplied by Dyce, to fill the line.

[8] The folio has "*peculiar sect* and *force*" instead of "*particular act* and *place*."

May give his saying deed; which is no further
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
If with too credent ear you list his songs,[9]
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmaster'd importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister;
And keep you in the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the Moon.
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the Spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd;[10]
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary, then; best safety lies in fear:
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

Oph. I shall th' effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,[11]
Show me the steep and thorny way to Heaven,
Whilst, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own read.[12]

Laer. O, fear me not.
I stay too long; — but here my father comes.

Enter POLONIUS.

A double blessing is a double grace;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

Pol. Yet here, Laertes? aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for. There, my blessing with thee!
[*Laying his Hand on* LAERTES' *Head.*
And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character.[13] Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar:[14]

[9] If with too *credulous* ear you *listen to* his songs.

[10] In Shakespeare's time, *canker* was often used of the worm that kills the early buds before they open out into flowers. Perhaps it here means a disease that sometimes infests plants, and *eats* out their life. — *Buttons* is *buds*, and *disclose* is used in the sense of *open* or *unfold*.

[11] Pastors that *have not the grace* to practise what they preach.

[12] *Regards* not his own *lesson*.

[13] To *character* is to *engrave* or *imprint*.

[14] *Vulgar* is here used in its old sense of *common*.

The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment[15]
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comráde. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
Bear't, that th' opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure,[16] but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man;
And they in France, of the best rank and station,
Are most select and generous, chief in that.[17]
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all, — to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee![18]

Laer. Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

Pol. The time invites you: go; your servants tend.

Laer. Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well
What I have said to you.

Oph. 'Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

Laer. Farewell. [*Exit* LAERTES.

Pol. What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

Oph. So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet

Pol. Marry, well bethought:
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you; and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.
If it be so, — as so 'tis put on me,
And that in way of caution, — I must tell you,
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behooves my daughter and your honour.
What is between you? give me up the truth.

Oph. He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
Of his affection to me.

[15] Do not *blunt* thy feeling by taking every new acquaintance by the hand, or by admitting him to the intimacy of a friend.

[16] *Censure* was continually used for *opinion*.

[17] The old copies give this line, "Are *of a* most select and generous *chef* in that." Both sense and verse concur in favor of the present reading, as Mr. Dyce also does.

[18] *Season* is here used, apparently, in the sense of *ingrain*; the idea being that of so *steeping* the counsel into his mind that it will not fade out.

Pol. Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his *tenders*, as you call them?
Oph. I do not know, my lord, what I should think.
Pol. Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby;
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly:
Or — not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus — you'll tender me a fool.[19]
Oph. My lord, he hath impórtun'd me with love[20]
In honourable fashion; —
Pol. Ay, *fashion* you may call't; go to, go to.
Oph. And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of Heaven.
Pol. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.[21] I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows. These blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, — extinct in both,
Even in their promise, as it is a-making, —
You must not take for fire. From this time, daughter,
Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence;
Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parley.[22] For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him, that he is young;
And with a larger tether may he walk[23]
Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,
Not of that dye which their investments show,[24]
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,[25]

[19] The quartos have *wrong* and the folio *roaming*, instead of *running*, which is Mr. Collier's correction, and is generally received. Polonius is comparing the phrase to a poor nag which, if run too hard, will be *wind-broken*.

[20] *Importun'd* has the second syllable long here, as, I believe, it always has in *Shakespeare*.

[21] This was a proverbial phrase. There is a collection of epigrams under that title: the woodcock being accounted a witless bird. from a vulgar notion that it had no brains. "Springes to catch woodcocks" means arts to entrap simplicity.

[22] Be more difficult of access, and let the *suits to you* for that purpose be of higher respect than a command to parley.

[23] That is, with a *longer line;* a horse, fastened by a string to a stake, is *tethered*.

[24] So the quartos; the folio, *eye* instead of *dye*. *Eye* was sometimes used in the sense of *shade;* as, in *The Tempest*, we have "an *eye* of green," but never, I believe, by itself to denote colour. Both Knight and White retain *eye* here.

[25] The Poet has other like instances of language. See page 42, note 8. This joining of words that are really incompatible, or qualifying of a noun with adjectives that literally quench it, sometimes gives great strength of expression. — The old copies read "pious *bonds*," which can hardly be made

The better to beguile. This is for all, —
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment's leisure
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you: come your ways.
Oph. I shall obey, my lord. [*Exeunt*

SCENE IV. *The Same. The Platform before the Castle.*

Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, *and* MARCELLUS.

Ham. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.
Hor. It is a nipping and an eager air.[1]
Ham. What hour now?
Hor. I think it lacks of twelve.
Mar. No, it is struck.
Hor. Indeed? I heard it not: then it draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.
[*A Flourish of Trumpets, and Ordnance shot off, within.*
What does this mean, my lord?
Ham. The King doth wake to-night, and takes his rouse,[2]
Keeps wassel, and the swaggering up-spring reels;[3]
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.
Hor. Is it a custom?
Ham. Ay, marry, is't:
But to my mind — though I am native here,
And to the manner born — it is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west[4]
Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations:
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition;[5] and indeed it takes

to yield any sense. Theobald proposed the change; and the use of *brokers*, which formerly meant the same as *panders*, shows it to be right.

[1] *Eager* was used in the sense of the French *aigre*, sharp, biting.

[2] To *wake* is to *hold a late revel* or *debauch*. A *rouse* is what we now call a *bumper*. — *Wassel* originally meant a drinking to one's health; from *wæs hæl*, health be to you: hence it came to be used for any festivity of the bottle and the bowl.

[3] Reels *through* the swaggering *up-spring*, which was the name of a rude, boisterous German dance, as appears from a passage in Chapman's *Alphonsus*: "We Germans have no changes in our dances; an almain and an *up-spring*, that is all."

[4] This and the following twenty-one lines are wanting in the folio.

[5] *Clepe* is an old Saxon word for *call*. — The Poet often uses *addition* for *title*; so that the meaning is, they sully our title by likening us to swine. The character here ascribed to the Danes appears to have had a basis of fact.

From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
So, oft it chances in particular men,
That, for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth, (wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin;)
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,[6]
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;
Or by some habit, that too much o'er-leavens
The form of plausive manners;[7] — that these men, —
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,[8] —
Their virtues else — be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo, —
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault: the dram of vile
Doth all the noble substance oft abate,[9]
To his own scandal; —

Hor. Look, my lord, it comes!

Enter the Ghost.

Ham. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! —
Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd;
Bring with thee airs from Heaven, or blasts from Hell;
Be thy intents wicked or charitable;
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,[10]
That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!

Heywood, in his *Drunkard Opened*, 1635, speaking of "the vinosity of nations," says the Danes have made profession thereof from antiquity, and are the first upon record "that have brought their wassel bowls and elbowdeep healths into this land."

[6] *Complexion* was often used to denote, not the colour of the skin, but any constitutional aptitude or predisposition. See page 133, note 4.

[7] *Plausive*, for *approvable:* another instance of the usage, so frequent in *Shakespeare*, of the active form with the passive sense. See page 66, note 4.

[8] Alluding to the old astrological notion, of a man's character or fortune being determined by the star that was in the ascendant on the day of his birth. Observe the change of the subject here from *these men* to *their virtues.*

[9] As already stated, this passage is not in the folio; and the quartos have "dram of *eale*" for "dram of *vile*," and *of a doubt* instead of *oft abate*. *Eale* is no word at all, and *bale*, *base*, *ill*, and *vile*, have all been proposed as substitutes for it. I prefer *vile* as being more likely to have been misprinted *eale*. Some editors change *of a doubt* to *often doubt*, construing *doubt* in the sense of *throwing doubt* or *distrust upon;* others change it to *often dout*, taking *dout* in the sense of *do out* or *destroy;* as the Poet has a like use of *doff* and *don*. I have ventured to change *of* into *oft*, and *a doubt* into *abate*, which was often used by old writers in the sense of *cast down* or *depress*. Perhaps *attaint* would give a slightly more congruous sense; but I prefer *abate* as more apt to have been misprinted *a doubt*. Mr. Dyce in his last edition changes "*of a doubt*" into "*oft debase;*" which may be right.

[10] "A *questionable* shape" is a shape that may be *questioned*, or *conversed with*. In like manner the Poet often uses *question* for *conversation*.

Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
Why thy canóniz'd bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements;[11] why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly in-urn'd,
Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws
To cast thee up again! What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel,
Revisitest thus the glimpses of the Moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of Nature
So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?[12]
Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?

[*The Ghost beckons* HAMLET.

Hor. It beckons you to go away with it,
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.

Mar. Look, with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground:
But do not go with it.

Hor. No, by no means.

Ham. It will not speak; then I will follow it.

Hor. Do not, my lord.

Ham. Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?
It waves me forth again: I'll follow it.

Hor. What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,[13]
And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,[14]

[11] *Canoniz'd* has the second syllable long, and means made sacred by the *canonical* rites of sepulture. — *Cerements* is a dissyllable. It is from a Latin word meaning *wax*, and was so applied from the use of wax or pitch in sealing up coffins or caskets so as to make them water-proof.

[12] "We fools of nature," in the sense here implied, is, we who cannot by nature know the mysteries of the supernatural world. Strict grammar would require *us* instead of *we*. — The general idea of the passage seems to be, that man's intellectual eye is not strong enough to bear the unmuffled light of eternity.

[13] Overhangs *its* base. Thus in Sidney's *Arcadia*: "Hills lift up their *beetle* brows, as if they would overlooke the pleasantnesse of their under prospect."

[14] To "deprive your *sovereignty* of reason" signifies to take from you the *government* of reason. We have similar instances of raising the idea of virtues or qualities by giving them rank, in Banquo's "*royalty* of nature;" and in this play we have "*nobility* of love," and "*dignity* of love." *Deprive* was often thus used in the sense of *take away*. — *Toys*, second line after, means *whims* or *fancies*.

And draw you into madness? think of it:
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea,
And hears it roar beneath.[15]

Ham. It waves me still. — Go on, I'll follow thee.

Mar. You shall not go, my lord.

Ham. Hold off your hands.

Hor. Be rul'd; you shall not go.

Ham. My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Némean lion's nerve. — [*Ghost beckons.*
Still am I call'd. — Unhand me, gentlemen; —
[*Breaking from them.*
By Heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me:[16]
I say, away! — Go on; I'll follow thee.
[*Exeunt Ghost and* HAMLET.

Hor. He waxes desperate with imagination.

Mar. Let's follow; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.

Hor. Have after. — To what issue will this come?

Mar. Something is rotten in the State of Denmark.

Hor. Heaven will direct it.

Mar. Nay, let's follow him. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V. *The Same. A more remote Part of the Platform.*

Enter the Ghost and HAMLET.

Ham. Where wilt thou lead me? speak; I'll go no further.

Ghost. Mark me.

Ham. I will.

Ghost. My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

Ham. Alas, poor ghost!

Ghost. Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

Ham. Speak; I am bound to hear.

Ghost. So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

Ham. What?

Ghost. I am thy father's spirit;
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,

[15] It was anciently believed that evil spirits sometimes assumed the guise of departed persons, to do what is here apprehended of the Ghost, drawing men into madness and suicide.

[16] To *let*, in old language, is to *hinder* or *prevent*.

Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away.[1] But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood;
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine:[2]
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love, —

Ham. O God!

Ghost. — Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Ham. Murder!

Ghost. Murder most foul, as in the best it is;
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

Ham. Haste me to know't; that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.

Ghost. I find thee apt;
And duller should'st thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,[3]
Would'st thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear:
'Tis given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abus'd: but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

Ham. O my prophetic soul![4] my uncle!

Ghost. Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts, —
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce! — won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous Queen.
O, Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity,
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage; and to decline

[1] Chaucer in the *Persones Tale* says, "The misese of hell shall be *in defaute of mete and drinke.*" So, too, in *The Wyll of the Devyll:* "Thou shalt lye in frost and fire, with sicknes and *hunger.*"

[2] Such is the old form of the word, and so Shakespeare always has it. It is commonly printed *porcupine*, both here and in other places; but this perhaps savours too much of modernizing the Poet's language.

[3] So the quartos; the folio has *rots* instead of *roots*.

[4] Hamlet has divined the truth before; hence the word *prophetic* here.

Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of Heaven;
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage.
But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air:
Brief let me be. — Sleeping within mine orchard,
My custom always in the afternoon,
Upon my sécure hour thy uncle stole,[5]
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of mine ears did pour
The leperous distilment;[6] whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man,
That, swift as quicksilver, it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body;[7]
And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,[8]
The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine;
And a most instant tetter bark'd about,[9]
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
All my smooth body.
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of Queen, at once despatch'd;
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhousell'd, disappointed, unanel'd;[10]
No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.

[5] *Secure* has the sense of the Latin *securus; unguarded, unsuspecting.*

[6] *Hebenon* is probably derived from *henbane*, the oil of which, according to Pliny, dropped into the ears, disturbs the brain; and there is sufficient evidence that it was held poisonous. So, in Anton's *Satires*, 1606: "The *poison'd henbane*, whose cold juice doth kill." It is, however, possible that poisonous qualities may have been ascribed to *ebony;* called *ebene*, and *ebeno*, by old English writers. So Marlow, in his *Jew of Malta*, speaking of noxious things: "The blood of Hydra, Lerna's bane, the juyce of *hebon*, and cocytus breath."

[7] The Poet here implies as much as was then known touching the circulation of the blood. See page 458, note 39. I suspect, indeed, that the physicians have as much right to claim him as the lawyers. The clergy, I believe, have never thought of claiming him.

[8] In the preceding scene, note 1, we have had *eager* in the sense of *sharp, biting.* "*Eager* droppings" are drops of *acid.*

[9] So the quartos; the folio has *bak'd* instead of *bark'd*, which means *formed a bark* or *scab.* — *Instant* is used in the Latin sense of *instans, urgent, importunate, itching.*

[10] *Unhousell'd* is without having received the sacrament. *Disappointed* is *unappointed, unprepared.* A man well furnished for an enterprise is said to be well-*appointed.* *Unanel'd* is without extreme unction. Thus, in Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey:* "Then we began to put him in mind of Christ's passion; and sent for the abbot of the place to *anneal* him."

Ham. O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible![11]
Ghost. If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But, howsoever thou pursu'st this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught: leave her to Heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:[12]
Adieu, adieu, adieu! remember me. [*Exit.*
Ham. O all you host of Heaven! O Earth! What else?
And shall I couple Hell?—O, fie!—Hold, hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up.—Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe.[13] Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter: yes, by Heaven.—
O most pernicious woman!—
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!—
My tables:[14] meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;[15]
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.— [*Writing.*
So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
It is, *Adieu, adieu! remember me.*
I have sworn't.
Hor. [*Within.*] My lord, my lord,—
Mar. [*Within.*] Lord Hamlet,—

[11] The old copies print this line as part of the Ghost's speech. Johnson thought it should be transferred to Hamlet, and Garrick delivered it as belonging to the Prince, according to the tradition of the stage. These authorities and the example of Mr. Verplanck have determined me to the change.

[12] *Uneffectual* is shining without *heat.*

[13] By *globe* Hamlet means his *head.*

[14] "*Tables* or books, or registers for memorie of things," were then used by all ranks, and contained prepared leaves from which what was written with a silver style could easily be effaced.

[15] I remember nothing equal to this burst, unless it be the first speech of Prometheus, in the Greek drama, after the *exit* of Vulcan and the two Afrites. But Shakespeare alone could have produced the vow of Hamlet to make his memory a blank of all maxims and generalized truths that "observation had copied there,"—followed immediately by the speaker noting down the generalized fact, "That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain."—COLERIDGE.

Hor. [*Within.*] Heaven secure him!
Mar. [*Within.*] So be it!
Hor. [*Within.*] Illo, ho, ho, my lord!
Ham. Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.[16]

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

Mar. How is't, my noble lord?
Hor. What news, my lord?
Ham. O, wonderful!
Hor. Good my lord, tell it.
Ham. No; you'll reveal it.
Hor. Not I, my lord, by Heaven.
Mar. Nor I, my lord.
Ham. How say you, then; would heart of man once think it?—
But you'll be secret?
Hor. Mar. Ay, by Heaven, my lord.
Ham. There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he's an arrant knave.[17]
Hor. There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.
Ham. Why, right; you are i' the right;
And so, without more circumstance at all,[18]
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:
You, as your business and desire shall point you,—
For every man hath business and desire,
Such as it is;—and, for mine own poor part,
Look you, I'll go pray.
Hor. These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.
Ham. I'm sorry they offend you, heartily; yes,
'Faith, heartily.
Hor. There's no offence, my lord.
Ham. Yes, by Saint Patrick,[19] but there is, Horatio,
And much offence too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost,[20] that let me tell you:

[16] This is the call which falconers use to their hawk in the air when they would have him come down to them.

[17] Dr. Isaac Ray, late of Providence, a man of large science and ripe experience in the treatment of insanity, says of Hamlet's behaviour in this scene, that "it betrays the excitement of delirium,—the wandering of a mind reeling under the first stroke of disease."

[18] The Poet often uses *circumstance* for *circumlocution*. So, in *Othello*, i. 1: "A bombast *circumstance* horribly stuff'd with epithets of war." See, also, page 104, note 27.

[19] Warburton has ingeniously defended Shakespeare for making the Danish Prince swear by *St. Patrick*, by observing that the whole northern world had their learning from Ireland.

[20] Hamlet means that the Ghost is a real ghost, just what it appears to be, and not "the Devil" in "a pleasing shape," as Horatio had apprehended it to be. See page 539, note 15.

For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster't as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.
Hor. What is't, my lord? we will.
Ham. Never make known what you have seen to-night.
Hor. Mar. My lord, we will not.
Ham. Nay, but swear't.
Hor. In faith, my lord, not I.
Mar. Nor I, my lord, in faith.
Ham. Upon my sword.
Mar. We've sworn, my lord, already.[21]
Ham. Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.
Ghost. [*Beneath.*] Swear.
Ham. Ha, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?[22] —
Come on, — you hear this fellow in the cellarage, —
Consent to swear.
Hor. Propose the oath, my lord.
Ham. Never to speak of this that you have seen,
Swear by my sword.
Ghost. [*Beneath.*] Swear.
Ham. *Hic et ubique!* then we'll shift our ground. —
Come hither, gentlemen,
And lay your hands again upon my sword:
Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword.
Ghost. [*Beneath.*] Swear.
Ham. Well said, old mole! canst work i' the ground so fast?
A worthy pioneer! — Once more remove, good friends.
Hor. O day and night! but this is wondrous strange.
Ham. And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dream'd of in your philosophy.[23]
But come; —
Here, as before, never, so help you Mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself; —

[21] The oath they have already sworn is *in faith*. But this has not enough of ritual solemnity in it, to satisfy Hamlet. The custom of swearing by the sword, or rather by the cross at the hilt of it, is very ancient. The Saviour's name was sometimes inscribed on the handle. So that swearing by one's sword was the most solemn oath a Christian soldier could take.

[22] *True-penny* is an old familiar term for a right honest fellow.

[23] So read all the quartos; the folio, "*our* philosophy." The passage has had so long a lease of familiarity, as it stands in the text, that it seems best not to change it. Besides, *your* gives a nice characteristic shade of meaning that is lost in *our*. It is not *Horatio's* philosophy, but your *philosophy*, that Hamlet is speaking of.

As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on;[24] —
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
as, *Well, well, we know*; or, *We could, an if we would*; or, *If we list to speak*; or, *There be, an if they might*;
Or such ambiguous giving-out, to note
That you know aught of me: — this not to do,
So Grace and Mercy at your most need help you,
Swear.

Ghost. [*Beneath.*] Swear.

[*They kiss the Hilt of Hamlet's Sword.*

Ham. Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! — So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you;
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do t' express his love and friending to you,
God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together;
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint: — O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right! —
Nay, come; let's go together. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II. SCENE I. *Elsinore. A Room in* POLONIUS' *House.*

Enter POLONIUS *and* REYNALDO.

Pol. Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

Rey. I will, my lord.

Pol. You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquiry
Of his behaviour.

Rey. My lord, I did intend it.

Pol. Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;[1]

[24] This has been taken as proving that Hamlet's "antic disposition" is merely assumed for a special purpose. But our ripest experts in the matter are far from regarding it so. They tell us that veritable madmen are sometimes inscrutably cunning in arts for disguising their state; saying, in effect, "To be sure, you may find me acting rather strangely at times, but you must not think me crazy; I know what I am about, and have a purpose in it"

[1] *Dansker* is *Dane*; *Dansk* being the ancient name of Denmark.

And how, and who; what means, and where they keep,[2]
What company, at what expense; and finding,
By this encompassment and drift of question,
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it:
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him;
As thus, *I know his father and his friends,*
And in part him; — do you mark this, Reynaldo?
Rey. Ay, very well, my lord.
Pol. *And in part him; but,* you may say, *not well:*
But, if't be he I mean, he's very wild;
Addicted so and so; — and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank
As may dishonour him, take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips,
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.
Rey. As gaming, my lord?
Pol. Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing,
Quarrelling, drabbing: — you may go so far.
Rey. My lord, that would dishonour him.
Pol. 'Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.
You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly,[3]
That they may seem the taints of liberty;
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind;
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.[4]
Rey. But, my good lord, —
Pol. Wherefore should you do this?
Rey. Ay, my lord, I would know that.
Pol. Marry, sir, here's my drift;
And I believe it is a fetch of warrant:[5]
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' the working,
Mark you,
Your party in convérse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty,[6] be assur'd

[2] The Poet repeatedly has *keep* in the sense of *lodge* or *dwell*. See page 267, note 22.

[3] *Quaintly*, from the Latin *comptus*, properly means *elegantly*, but is here used in the sense of *adroitly* or *ingeniously*. See page 121, note 2.

[4] A wildness of untamed blood, such as youth is generally assailed by.

[5] "A fetch of warrant" seems to mean an allowable stratagem or artifice.

[6] Having *at any time* seen the youth you *speak* of guilty in the *forenamed*

He closes with you in this consequence:
Good sir, or so; or *friend*, or *gentleman*,—
According to the phrase, or the addition,
Of man and country;—

Rey. Very good, my lord.

Pol. And then, sir, does he this,—he does—what was I about to say?—By the Mass,[7] I was about to say something:—where did I leave?

Rey. At, *closes in the consequence*,
At *friend or so* and *gentleman*.

Pol. At *closes in the consequence*,—ay, marry;
He closes with you thus: *I know the gentleman;*
I saw him yesterday, or *t'other day*,
Or then, or then; *with* such, or such; *and, as you say*,
There was he gaming; there o'ertook in's rouse;
There falling out at tennis. See you now,
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;[8]
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlaces and with assays of bias,[9]
By indirections find directions out:
So, by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

Rey. My lord, I have.

Pol. God b' wi' you! fare you well.

Rey. Good my lord!

Pol. Observe his inclination in yourself.[10]

Rey. I shall, my lord.

Pol. And let him ply his music.[11]

vices.—"Closes with you in this consequence" means, apparently, *agrees* with you in this *conclusion*.—*Addition* again for *title*.

[7] *Mass* is the old name of the Lord's Supper, and is still used by the Roman Catholics. It was often sworn by, as in this instance.—As *marry* occurs several times here, it may be well to remark that this use of the word grew from the custom of swearing by Saint Mary the Virgin.

[8] The shrewd old wire-puller is fond of angling arts. The *carp* is a species of fish.

[9] "Of wisdom and of reach" is here equivalent to *by cunning and overreaching*.—*Windlaces* is here used in the sense of taking a winding, circuitous, or round-about course to a thing, instead of going *directly* to it; or, as we sometimes say, "beating about the bush," instead of coming straight to the point. This is shown by a late writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, who quotes two passages in illustration of it from Golding's translation of *Ovid*, which is known to have been one of the Poet's books. Here is one of the quotations:

> "The winged god, beholding them returning in a troupe,
> Continu'd not directly forth, but gan me down to stoupe,
> And fetch'd a *windlass* round about."

"Assays of bias" are *trials* of *inclination*. A bias is a weight in one side of a ball, which keeps it from rolling straight to the mark, as in ninepins.

[10] Use your own eyes and judgment upon him, as well as learn from others.

[11] Eye him sharply, but do it *slyly*, and let him fiddle his secrets all out.

Rey. Well, my lord.
Pol. Farewell! — [*Exit* REYNALDO.

Enter OPHELIA.

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?
Oph. Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted!
Pol. With what, i' the name of God?
Oph. My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,
Lord Hamlet, — with his doublet all unbrac'd;[12]
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle;[13]
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of Hell
To speak of horrors, — he comes before me.
Pol. Mad for thy love?
Oph. My lord, I do not know;
But, truly, I do fear it.
Pol. What said he?
Oph. He took me by the wrist, and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so:
At last, — a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down, —
He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound,
That it did seem to shatter all his bulk,[14]
And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And, to the last, bended their light on me.
Pol. Come, go with me: I will go seek the King.
This is the very ecstasy of love;
Whose violent property fordoes itself,[15]
And leads the will to desperate undertakings,
As oft as any passion under heaven

[12] *Unbrac'd* is the same as our *unbuttoned*. So used twice in *Julius Cæsar*.

[13] Hanging down like the loose cincture which confines the fetters or gyves round the ankles.

[14] *Bulk* is *breast*. "The *bulke* or *breast* of a man, Thorax, la poitrine." — BARET.

[15] *Fordo* was the same as *undo* or *destroy*. — *Ecstasy* occurs several times in this play for *madness*. Such was the more common meaning of the word in Shakespeare's time; though it was also used for any violent working of the mind.

That does afflict our natures. I am sorry, —
What, have you given him any hard words of late?
Oph. No, my good lord; but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters, and denied
His access to me.
Pol. That hath made him mad.
I'm sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him: [16] I fear'd he did but trifle,
And meant to wreck thee; but, beshrew my jealousy! [17]
By Heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions,
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. [18] Come, go we to the King:
This must be known; which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love. [19] [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *The Same. A Room in the Castle.*

Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and Attendants.*

King. Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you, [1]
The need we had to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,
Since nor th' exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from th' understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both,
That, — being of so young days brought up with him,
And since so neighbour'd to his youth and humour, —
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our Court
Some little time; so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,
So much as from occasion you may glean,

[16] To *quote* is to *note*, to *mark*, or *observe*.

[17] In this admirable scene, Polonius, who is throughout the skeleton of his own former skill in state-craft, hunts the trail of policy at a dead scent, supplied by the weak fever-smell in his own nostrils. — COLERIDGE.

[18] We old men are as apt to overreach ourselves with our own policy, as the young are to miscarry through inconsideration.

[19] The sense is rather obscure, but appears to be, — By keeping Hamlet's love secret, we may cause more of grief to others, than of hatred on his part by disclosing it. The Poet sometimes goes out of his way to close a scene with a rhyme.

[1] I do not recollect another instance of *moreover that* used in this way. It means the same as *besides that*.

Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.
Queen. Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you;
And sure I am two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
To show us so much gentry and good will[2]
As to expend your time with us awhile,
For the supply and profit of our hope,[3]
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.
Ros. Both your Majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.
Guil. But we both obey;
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent,
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded.
King. Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.
Queen. Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz:
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too-much-changed son. — Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.
Guil. Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him!
Queen. Ay, amen!

[*Exeunt* Ros., Guil., *and some Attendants.*

Enter Polonius.

Pol. Th' ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully return'd.
King. Thou still hast been the father of good news.
Pol. Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege,
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious King:[4]
And I do think (or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath us'd to do) that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.
King. O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.
Pol. Give, first, admittance to th' ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.
King. Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in. —

[*Exit* Polonius

[2] *Gentry* for *gentle courtesy.*
[3] "The supply and profit" is the *feeding* and *realizing.*
[4] I hold my duty both to my God and to my King, as I do my soul.

He tells me, my sweet Queen, that he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.
Queen. I doubt it is no other but the main;
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.
King. Well, we shall sift him.—

Re-enter POLONIUS, *with* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?
Vol. Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies; which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;
But, better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your Highness: whereat griev'd,—
That so his sickness, age, and impotence,
Was falsely borne in hand,[5]—sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys;
Receives rebuke from Norway; and, in fine,
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give th' assay of arms against your Majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,[6]
And his commission to employ those soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack:
With an intreaty, herein further shown, [*Giving a Paper.*
That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for this enterprise;
On such regards of safety and allowance
As therein are set down.
King. It likes us well;[7]
And at our more consider'd time we'll read,
Answer, and think upon this business:
Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour.
Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together:
Most welcome home!
[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.
Pol. This business is well ended.—
My Liege, and Madam, to expostulate[8]
What Majesty should be, what duty is,

[5] To *bear in hand* is to lead along by false assurances or expectations. See page 347, note 7.

[6] *Fee* was often used for *fee-simple*, which is the strongest tenure in English law, and means an estate held in absolute and perpetual right.

[7] This phrase was continually used for "it *pleases* us," or "*we like* it."

[8] *Expostulate* here has the right Latin sense of *inquire*.

Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

Queen. More matter, with less art.

Pol. Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true, 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis, 'tis true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him, then; and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect;
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause:
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.
Perpend:[9]
I have a daughter, — have, whilst she is mine, —
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: Now gather and surmise.

[Reads.] *To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,* — That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; *beautified* is a vile phrase; but you shall hear. — Thus: *In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.*[10]

Queen. Came this from Hamlet to her?

Pol. Good Madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful. —

[Reads.] *Doubt thou the stars are fire;*
Doubt that the Sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, HAMLET

This in obedience hath my daughter shown me;
And, more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to mine ear.

King. But how hath she
Receiv'd his love?

9 *Perpend* is *weigh* or *consider.*

10 The word *these* was usually added at the end of the superscription of letters.

Pol. What do you think of me?
King. As of a man faithful and honourable.
Pol. I would fain prove so. But what might you think,—
When I had seen this hot love on the wing,
(As I perceiv'd it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me,) what might you,
Or my dear Majesty your Queen here, think,
If I had play'd the desk or table-book;[11]
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb;[12]
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight;
What might you think? No, I went round to work,[13]
And my young mistress thus did I bespeak:
Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;[14]
This must not be: and then I precepts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;
And he, repulsed, (a short tale to make,)
Fell into a sadness; then into a fast;
Thence to a watch; thence into a weakness;
Thence to a lightness; and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we wail for.
King. Do you think 'tis this?
Queen. It may be, very likely.
Pol. Hath there been such a time—I'd fain know that—
That I have positively said *'Tis so,*
When it prov'd otherwise?
King. Not that I know.
Pol. [*Pointing to his Head and Shoulder.*] Take this from this, if this be otherwise:
If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.
King. How may we try it further?
Pol. You know, sometimes he walks four hours together[15]
Here in the lobby.
Queen. So he does, indeed.
Pol. At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:

[11] By keeping dark about the matter. A desk or table-book does not prate of what it contains. A table-book is a case or set of tablets, to carry in the pocket, and write memoranda upon. See page 542, note 14.
[12] If I had given my heart a *hint* to be mute about their passion. "Conniventia, a *winking at;* a sufferance; *a feigning not to see or know.*"
[13] To be *round* is to be *plain, downright, outspoken.*
[14] Not within thy *destiny;* alluding to the supposed influence of the stars on the fortune of life.
[15] I have little doubt that this should read "walks *for* hours together."

Be you and I behind an arras then;[16]
Mark the encounter: if he love her not,
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a State,
But keep a farm and carters.

King. We will try it.

Queen. But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.[17]

Pol. Away! I do beseech you, both away:
I'll board him presently:[18] O, give me leave. —
[*Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants.*

Enter HAMLET, *reading.*

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

Ham. Well, God-'a-mercy.

Pol. Do you know me, my lord?

Ham. Excellent well; you're a fishmonger.[19]

Pol. Not I, my lord.

Ham. Then I would you were so honest a man.

Pol. Honest, my lord!

Ham. Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man pick'd out of ten thousand.

Pol. That's very true, my lord.

Ham. [Pretending to read.] *For if the Sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion,*[20] — Have you a daughter?

Pol. I have, my lord.

Ham. Let her not walk i' the Sun: — friend, look to't.

Pol. How say you by that? — [*Aside.*] Still harping on my daughter: yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger. He is far gone, far gone: and truly in my youth

[16] In Shakespeare's time the chief rooms of houses were lined with tapestry hangings, which were suspended on frames some distance from the walls, to keep them from being rotted by the damp. See page 291, note 51. These tapestries were called *arras* from the town *Arras*, in France, where they were made.

[17] *Wretch* was the strongest term of endearment in the language; generally implying, however, a dash of pity. So, in *Othello*, iii. 3, the hero, speaking of Desdemona, exclaims in a rapture of tenderness, "Excellent *wretch*, perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee!"

[18] To *board* him is to *accost* or *address* him. See page 180, note 10.

[19] *Fishmonger* meant an angler as well as a dealer in fish. Hamlet probably means that Polonius has come to *fish out* his secret.

[20] The old copies have *good* instead of *god*; but *god* is probably right, as the Poet elsewhere speaks of the Sun as Titan, "kissing a dish of butter," and as "common-kissing Titan." — A great deal of ink has been spent in trying to explain the passage; but the true explanation is, that it is not meant to be understood. Hamlet is merely bantering and tantalizing the old man.

I suffer'd much extremity for love; very near this. I'll speak to him again. — What do you read, my lord?

Ham. Words, words, words.

Pol. What is the matter, my lord?

Ham. Between who?

Pol. I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

Ham. Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here, that old men have gray beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum; and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir, should be as old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

Pol. [*Aside.*] Though this be madness, yet there's method in't. — Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

Ham. Into my grave?

Pol. Indeed, that is out o' the air. — [*Aside.*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be deliver'd of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter. — My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

Ham. You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal; — [*Aside.*] except my life, except my life, except my life.

Pol. Fare you well, my lord.

Ham. These tedious old fools!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Pol. You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

Ros. [*To* POLONIUS.] God save you, sir! [*Exit* POLON.

Guil. My honour'd lord!

Ros. My most dear lord!

Ham. My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? — Ah, Rosencrantz! — Good lads, how do ye both?

Ros. As the indifferent children of the Earth.

Guil. Happy, in that we are not overhappy;
On Fortune's cap we're not the very button.

Ham. Nor the soles of her shoe?

Ros. Neither, my lord.

Ham. What news?

Ros. None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

Ham. Then is dooms-day near. But your news is not true. Let me question more in particular: What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

Guil. Prison, my lord!

Ham. Denmark's a prison.

Ros. Then is the world one.

Ham. A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

Ros. We think not so, my lord.

Ham. Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

Ros. Why, then your ambition makes it one: 'tis too narrow for your mind.

Ham. O God! I could be bounded in a nut-shell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

Guil. Which dreams, indeed, are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

Ham. A dream itself is but a shadow.

Ros. Truly; and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality, that it is but a shadow's shadow.

Ham. Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretch'd heroes the beggars' shadows.[21] Shall we to the Court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.[22]

Ros. Guil. We'll wait upon you.

Ham. No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of my servants; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended.[23] But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

Ros. To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

Ham. Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks, but I thank you; and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a half-penny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

Guil. What should we say, my lord?

Ham. Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour: I know the good King and Queen have sent for you.

Ros. To what end, my lord?

Ham. That you must teach me. But let me conjure you by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our

[21] Hamlet is here playing or fencing with words, and loses himself in the riddles he is making. The meaning, however, seems to be, our beggars can at least dream of being kings and heroes; and if the substance of such ambitious men is but a dream, and if a dream is but a shadow, then our kings and heroes are but the shadows of our beggars.

[22] *Fay* is merely a diminutive of *faith*.

[23] Probably referring to the "bad dreams" already spoken of.

youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no.

Ros. [*Aside to* GUIL.] What say you?

Ham. [*Aside.*] Nay, then I have an eye of you.[24] — If you love me, hold not off.

Guil. My lord, we were sent for.

Ham. I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the King and Queen moult no feather.[25] I have of late — but wherefore I know not — lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament,[26] this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, — why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

Ros. My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

Ham. Why did you laugh then, when I said, *man delights not me?*

Ros. To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you:[27] we coted them on the way, and hither are they coming to offer you service.

Ham. He that plays the King shall be welcome; his Majesty shall have tribute of me: the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace;[28] the clown shall

[24] I will watch you sharply: *of* for *on*, a common usage.

[25] Hamlet's fine sense of honour is well shown in this. He will not tempt them to any breach of confidence; and he means that, by telling them the reason, he will forestall and prevent their disclosure of it. — *Moult* is an old word for *change;* used especially of birds when casting their feathers. So, in Bacon's *Natural History:* "Some birds there be, that upon their *moulting* do turn colour; as robin-redbreasts, after their moulting, grow red again by degrees."

[26] So the quartos; the folio omits *firmament*, and so turns *o'erhanging* into a substantive. It may well be thought that by the omission the language becomes more Shakespearian, without any loss of eloquence. But the passage, as it stands, is so much a household word, that it seems best not to change it. *Brave* is *grand, splendid.*

[27] "*Lenten* entertainment" is entertainment for the season of *Lent*, when players were not allowed to perform in public. See page 184, note 3. — To *cote* is to pass *alongside*, to *pass by* or *overtake.*

[28] *Humorous man* here means a man made unhappy by his own crotchets.

make those laugh whose lungs are tickled o' the sere;[29] and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. — What players are they?

Ros. Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the tragedians of the city.

Ham. How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.[30]

Ros. I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.[31]

Ham. Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so follow'd?

Ros. No, indeed, they are not.

Ham. How comes it? do they grow rusty?

Ros. Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but there is, sir, an aiery of children, little eyases,[32] that cry out on the top of question,[33] and are most tyrannically clapp'd for't: these are now the fashion; and so berattle the common stages,[34] (so they call them,) that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose quills, and dare scarce come thither.[35]

Humour was used for any wayward, eccentric impulse causing a man to be full of ups and downs, or of flats and sharps. Such characters were favourites on the stage. The melancholy Jaques in *As You Like It* is an instance.

[29] Hamlet is not pleased with the behaviour of the clowns, and is dispar aging them by ironical praise. "Tickled o' the *sere*" is tickled with *dryness*, or afflicted with a *dry cough*. So that the meaning is, the clown shall have the pleasure of thinking those to be laughing at his jokes, who are merely coughing from huskiness.

[30] The London theatrical companies, when not allowed to play in the city, were wont to travel about the country, and exercise their craft in the towns. This was less reputable, and at the same time brought less pay, than residing in the city. Stratford was often visited by such strolling companies during the Poet's boyhood, and hence it was, probably, that he found his way to the stage.

[31] Referring, no doubt, to an order of the Privy Council, issued in June, 1600. By this order the players were *inhibited* from acting in or near the city during the season of Lent, besides being very much restricted at all other seasons, and hence "chances it they travel," or *stroll* into the country. See page 210, note 5.

[32] *Aiery*, from *eyren*, eggs, properly means a *brood* but sometimes a *nest*. *Eyas* is a name for an unfledged hawk.

[33] There is some doubt as to the meaning of this. Mr. White thinks it means that they "assume superiority;" Mr. Dyce, that they "recite at the very highest pitch of their voice." The context infers that they are mightily "cracked up" as excelling in something which a sober judgment would regard as a fault. To *top*, in *Shakespeare*, is generally to *surpass*; as in *Coriolanus*, ii. 1: "*Topping* all others in boasting." And in iv. 7, of this play: "So far he *topp'd* my thought." And a little later in this scene Hamlet has the words, "whose judgments cried *in the top* of mine," clearly meaning, whose judgments *were better than* mine. — *Question* has repeatedly occurred in the sense of *speech* or *conversation*.

[34] To *berattle* is to *berate* or *squib*. The sense of what follows is, that pop-guns outface pistols.

[35] The allusion is to the children of St. Paul's and of the Revels, whose performing of plays was much in fashion at the time this play was written. From an early date, the choir-boys of St. Paul's, Westminster, Windsor,

Ham. What, are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escoted?[36] Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players, (as it is most like, if their means are no better,) their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession?[37]

Ros. 'Faith, there has been much to-do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy:[38] there was, for a while, no money bid for argument, unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

Ham. Is't possible?

Guil. O, there has been much throwing about of brains.[39]

Ham. Do the boys carry it away?

Ros. Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.[40]

Ham. It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Flourish of Trumpets within.*

Guil. There are the players.

Ham. Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come: the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in this garb;[41] lest my extent to the players (which, I tell you, must show fairly outward) should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome; but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceiv'd.

Guil. In what, my dear lord?

and the Chapel Royal, were engaged in such performances, and sometimes played at Court. The complaint here is, that these juveniles so abuse "the common stages," that is, the theatres, as to deter many from visiting them. In *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, 1601, one of the speakers says they were heard "with much applause:" and another speaks thus: "I sawe the children of Powles last night, and, troth, they pleas'd me prettie, prettie well: the apes in time will do it handsomely."

[36] *Escoted* is *paid*; from the French *escot*, a *shot* or *reckoning*. — *Quality* is *profession* or *calling*; often so used. — "No longer than they can sing" means no longer than they keep the voices of boys.

[37] *Run down* the profession to which they are themselves to *succeed*.

[38] *To-do*, commonly printed *to do*, is the same as *ado*. — To *tarre* is to *set on*, or *incite*; a phrase borrowed from setting on dogs. — I am not sure that I understand what follows. *Argument* was commonly used for *subject* or *matter*, but it hardly seems to mean that here. Perhaps *inducement* comes nearest to the meaning of it.

[39] Bandying of wit, or pelting each other with words.

[40] That is, carry all the world before them: there is perhaps an allusion to the *Globe* theatre, the sign of which is said to have been Hercules carrying the globe.

[41] To *comply with*, as here used, evidently means to be *formally civil* or *polite to*, or to *compliment*. We have it again in the same sense, in v. 2 where Hamlet says of Osric, "He did *comply with* his dug before he suck'd it."

Ham. I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw.[42]

Re-enter POLONIUS.

Pol. Well be with you, gentlemen!

Ham. Hark you, Guildenstern, — and you too; — at each ear a hearer: that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling-clouts.

Ros. Haply he's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

Ham. I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. — You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 'twas then, indeed.[43]

Pol. My lord, I have news to tell you.

Ham. My lord, I have news to tell you: when Roscius was an actor in Rome, —

Pol. The actors are come hither, my lord.

Ham. Buz, buz![44]

Pol. Upon my honour, —

Ham. Then came each actor on his ass.

Pol. — the best actors in the world, either for tragedy comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited:[45] Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ, and the liberty, these are the only men.[46]

Ham. O, Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

Pol. What treasure had he, my lord?

Ham. Why,

One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.

[42] "To know a hawk from a handsaw" was a proverb in Shakespeare's time. *Handsaw* is merely a corruption of *hernshaw*, which means a *heron*.

[43] This is spoken in order to blind Polonius as to what they have been talking about.

[44] Hamlet affects to discredit the news: all a mere *buzzing* or *rumour*. Polonius then assures him, "On my honour;" which starts the poor joke, If they are come on your honour, "then came each actor on his ass;" these words being probably a quotation.

[45] I am not quite sure as to the meaning of this. In the Classic Drama generally, the scene continued the same, or *undivided*, all through the piece. In the Gothic Drama, as Shakespeare found and fixed it, the changes of scene are without definite limitations. This seems to be the difference meant. Seneca was considered the best of the Roman tragic writers, and Plautus of the comic.

[46] "The meaning," says Collier, "probably is, that the players were good, whether at written productions or at extemporal plays, where liberty was allowed to the performers to invent the dialogue, in imitation of the Italian *commedie al improviso*."

Pol. [*Aside.*] Still on my daughter.

Ham. Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

Pol. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

Ham. Nay, that follows not.

Pol. What follows, then, my lord?

Ham. Why, *As by lot, God wot;* and then, you know, *It came to pass, as most like it was,*[47] — The first row of the pious chanson will show you more; for look, where my abridgment comes.[48] —

Enter Four or Five Players.

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all; I am glad to see ye well; welcome, good friends. — O, my old friend! thy face is valanc'd since I saw thee last:[49] com'st thou to beard me in Denmark? — What, my young lady and mistress! By'r-Lady your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine.[50] 'Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not crack'd within the ring.[51] — Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at any thing we see: we'll have a speech straight.

[47] Here again Hamlet is tantalizing and bewildering the old fox, and quibbling between a logical and a literal sequence. The lines he quotes are from an old ballad, entitled *Jephtha, Judge of Israel.* A copy of the ballad, as Shakespeare knew it, was reprinted in Evans' *Old Ballads,* in 1810; the first stanza being as follows:

"I have read that many years agoe,
When Jephtha, judge of Israel,
Had one fair daughter and no moe,
Whom he loved passing well;
As by lot, God wot,
It came to passe, most like it was,
Great warrs there should be,
And who should be the chiefe but he, but he."

[48] *Chanson* is something to be *sung* or *chanted;* and "the first *row*" probably means the first *column*, or, perhaps, *stanza.* — *Abridgment* was sometimes used in the sense of *pastime.* Probably Hamlet means it also in the further sense of *abridging* or *cutting short* his talk with Polonius.

[49] *Valanc'd* is *fringed*, and here means that the player has lately grown a beard. — *By'r Lady* is a contraction of *by our Lady*, referring to the Virgin Mary. In the Poet's time, female parts were acted by boys; and Hamlet is addressing one whom as a boy he had seen playing some heroine.

[50] *Chopine* was the name of an enormously thick-soled shoe which Spanish and Italian ladies were in a habit of wearing, in order, as would seem, to make themselves as tall as the men, perhaps taller; or it may have been, to keep their long skirts from mopping the sidewalks too much. Old Coriate has it that some of those worn by the Venetian ladies were "half a yard high." The fashion is said to have been used at one time by the English.

[51] The old gold coin was thin and liable to crack. There was a *ring*, or circle on it, within which the sovereign's head was stamped; if the crack extended beyond this ring, it was rendered uncurrent: it was therefore a simile applied to any other injured object. There is some humour in applying it to a *cracked voice.*

— Come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.

1 *Play.* What speech, my good lord?

Ham. I heard thee speak me a speech once, — but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleas'd not the million; 'twas caviare to the general:[52] but it was — as I receiv'd it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine — an excellent play; well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury,[53] nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation; but call'd it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly lov'd: 'twas Æneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter. If it live in your memory, begin at this line: let me see, let me see; —

The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast, —

'tis not so; — it begins with Pyrrhus:

The rugged Pyrrhus — he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse —
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
With heraldry more dismal: head to foot
Now he is total gules;[54] *horridly trick'd*
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and a damned light
To their vile murders. Roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks. —

So proceed you.

Pol. 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken; with good accent and good discretion.

1 Play. *Anon he finds him*

[52] *Caviare* was the pickled roes of certain fish of the sturgeon kind, called in Italy *caviale*, and much used there and in other countries. Great quantities were prepared on the river Volga formerly. As a dish of high seasoning and peculiar flavour, it was not relished by the *many*; that is, the *general*.

[53] No impertinent high-seasoning or false brilliancy, to give it an unnatural relish. *Sallet* is explained "a pleasant and merry word that maketh folk to laugh." — This passage shows that the Poet understood the essential poverty of "fine writing."

[54] *Gules* is *red*, in the language of heraldry: to *trick* is to colour.

Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command. Unequal match'd,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage, strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
Th' unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base; and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for, lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood;
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,[55]
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forg'd for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.—
Out, out, thou [harlot,] Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod, take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends! [56]

Pol. This is too long.

Ham. It shall to the barber's, with your beard.—Pr'ythee, say on: He's for a jig,[57] or he sleeps:—Say on: come to Hecuba.

1 Play. *But who, O, who had seen the mobled Queen—*

Ham. *The mobled queen?*

[55] *Rack*, from *reek*, is used by old writers to signify the highest and therefore lightest clouds. Thus, in Fletcher's *Women Pleased*, iv. 2: "Far swifter than the sailing *rack* that gallops upon the wings of angry winds." So that the heavens must be silent indeed, when "the rack stands still."

[56] This admirable substitution of the epic for the dramatic, giving such reality to the dramatic diction of Shakespeare's own dialogue, and authorized, too, by the actual style of the tragedies before his time, is well worthy of notice. The fancy that a burlesque was intended sinks below criticism: the lines, as epic narrative, are superb.—In the thoughts, and even in the separate parts of the diction, this description is highly poetical: in truth, taken by itself, that is its fault, that it is too poetical!—the language of lyric vehemence and epic pomp, and not of the drama. But if Shakespeare had made the diction truly dramatic, where would have been the contrast between *Hamlet* and the play in *Hamlet*?—COLERIDGE.

[57] *Giga*, in Italian, was a fiddle or crowd; *gigaro*, a fiddler, or minstrel. Hence a *jig* was a ballad, or ditty, sung to the fiddle.

Pol. That's good; *mobled queen* is good.[58]

1 Play.—*Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames*
With bisson rheum;[59] *a clout upon that head*
Where late the diadem stood; and, for a robe,
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,
A blanket, in th' alarm of fear caught up;—
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd
'Gainst Fortune's State would treason have pronounc'd
But if the gods themselves did see her then,
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs;
The instant burst of clamour that she made—
Unless things mortal move them not at all—
Would have made milch the burning eye of heaven,
And passion in the gods.[60]

Pol. Look, whether he has not turn'd his colour, and has tears in's eyes.—Pr'ythee, no more.

Ham. 'Tis well; I'll have thee speak out the rest soon.—Good my lord, will you see the players well bestow'd? Do you hear? let them be well us'd; for they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

Pol. My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

Ham. 'Od's bodykins, man, better:[61] use every man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

Pol. Come, sirs.

Ham. Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow.—

[*Exit* POLONIUS *with all of the Players except the First.*

Dost thou hear me, old friend? can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*?

1 *Play.* Ay, my lord.

Ham. We'll have't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?

1 *Play.* Ay, my lord.

[58] *Mobled* is *hastily* or *carelessly dressed.* To *mob* or *mab* is still used in the north of England for to dress in a slatternly manner; and Coleridge says "*mob*-cap is still a word in common use for a morning cap."

[59] *Bisson* is *blind. Bisson rheum* is therefore *blinding tears.*

[60] By a hardy poetical license this expression means, "Would have *filled with tears* the burning eye of heaven." We have "Lemosus, *milch*-hearted," in Huloet's and Lyttleton's Dictionaries. It is remarkable that, in old Italian, lattuoso is used for luttuoso, in the same metaphorical manner.

[61] *'Od's bodykins* is a diminutive of *God's body*, an ancient oath. See page 270, note 7.

Ham. Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. [*Exit Player.*]—My good friends, [*To* Ros. *and* GUIL.] I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

Ros. Good my lord!

Ham. Ay, so, God b' wi' ye.— [*Exeunt* ROSE. *and* GUILD

Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous, that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit,[62]
That from her working all his visage wann'd:
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion[63]
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty, and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze, indeed,
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John a-dreams,[64] unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made.[65] Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by th' nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,
As deep as to the lungs?[66] Who does me this, ha?

[62] *Conceit* is used repeatedly by the Poet for *conception* or *imagination*.

[63] The *hint* or *prompt-word*, a technical phrase among players. "A prompter," says Florio, "one who keepes the booke for the plaiers, and teacheth them or schollers their *kue*."

[64] This John was probably distinguished as a sleepy, apathetic fellow, a sort of dreaming or droning simpleton or flunky. The only other mention of him that has reached us is in Armin's *Nest of Ninnies*, 1608: "His name is John, indeed, says the cinnick, but neither John a-nods nor *John a-dreams*, yet either, as you take it."

[65] Thus Chapman, in his *Revenge for Honour*: "That he might in the mean time make a sure *defeat* on our good aged father's life."

[66] This was giving one the lie with the most galling additions and terms of insult, or belaboring him with extreme provocation, and then rubbing it in; so that the not resenting it would stamp him as the most hopeless of cowards. So, in *King Richard II.*, when Norfolk would drive home his charge upon Bolingbroke with the utmost force, he exclaims: "As low as to thy heart, through the false passage of thy throat, thou liest."

'Zounds, I should take it; for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall
To make oppression bitter;[67] or, ere this,
I should have fatted all the region kites[68]
With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain![69]
O, vengeance!—
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave;
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by Heaven and Hell,[70]
Must, like a [trull,] unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion!
Fie upon't! foh!—About, my brain![71] I've heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul, that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,[72]
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the Devil: and the Devil hath power
T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
(As he is very potent with such spirits,)
Abuses me to damn me.[73] I'll have grounds

[67] Lack gall to make me feel the bitterness of oppression.—The gentleness of doves and pigeons was supposed to proceed from their not having any gall in them.

[68] All the kites of the *element*, or of the *airy* region, the sky. So, in one of the Player's speeches a little before: "Anon the dreadful thunder doth rend the *region*." See page 176, note 7.

[69] *Kindless* is *unnatural*. See page 525, note 8.—Observe how Hamlet checks himself in this strain of objurgation, and then, in mere shame of what he has just done, turns to ranting at himself for having ranted.

[70] By all the best and all the worst passions of his nature.—In the preceding line, the quarto of 1611 and some copies of the undated quarto read as in the text: the other quartos and the folio have "the son of *the* dear *murdered*," which some modern editors prefer.

[71] "*About*, my brain," is nothing more than "*to work*, my brain." The phrase to go *about* a thing, is still common.

[72] To *tent* was to *probe*, to search a wound. To *blench* is to *shrink* or *start*.

[73] That Hamlet was not alone in the suspicion here started, appears from Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*: "I believe that those apparitions and ghosts of departed persons are not the wandering souls of men, but the unquiet walks of devils, prompting and suggesting us into mischief, blood, and villainy; instilling and stealing into our hearts that the blessed spirits are

More relative than this:[74] the play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. [*Exit.*

ACT III. SCENE I. *Elsinore. A Room in the Castle.*

Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. And can you, by no drift of circumstance,
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?
Ros. He does confess he feels himself distracted;
But from what cause he will by no means speak.
Guil. Nor do we find him forward to be sounded;
But with a crafty madness keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.
Queen. Did he receive you well?
Ros. Most like a gentleman.
Guil. But with much forcing of his disposition.
Ros. Niggard of question; but, of our demands,
Most free in his reply.
Queen. Did you assay him to any pastime?
Ros. Madam, it so fell out, that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way:[1] of these we told him;
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it. They are about the Court;
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.
Pol. 'Tis most true.
And he beseech'd me to entreat your Majesties
To hear and see the matter.
King. With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclin'd.—
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.
Ros. We shall, my lord. [*Exeunt* ROSE. *and* GUILD.

not at rest in their graves, but wander, solicitous of the affairs of the world." To *abuse*, in the Poet's language, is to *deceive*, or *practise upon* with illusions.

[74] Grounds standing in closer and clearer relation with the matter alleged by the Ghost.

[1] *O'er-raught* is *overtook*, *raught* being the old form of *reached*,

King. Sweet Gertrude, leave us too:
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia:[2]
Her father and myself, lawful espials,
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing, unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge;
And gather by him, as he is behav'd,
If't be th' affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

Queen. I shall obey you:—
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness: so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

Oph. Madam, I wish it may. [*Exit* QUEEN.

Pol. Ophelia, walk you here. — Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves. — [*To* OPH.] Read on this book;
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. — We're oft to blame in this, —
'Tis too much prov'd, — that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The Devil himself.

King. O, 'tis too true! —
[*Aside.*] How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience.
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it[3]
Than is my deed to my most painted word:
O heavy burden!

Pol. I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.
[*Exeunt* KING *and* POLONIUS.

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. To be, or not to be, — that is the question: —
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. — To die; — to sleep, —
No more: and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, — 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, — to sleep; —

[2] *Affront* was sometimes used for *meet*, or, as it is explained a little after, *encounter*. So, in *Cymbeline*, iv. 3: "Your preparation can *affront* no less than what you hear of."

[3] Not more ugly *in comparison with* the thing that helps it. *To* is in several places so used by the Poet.

To sleep! perchance to dream; — ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,[4]
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life:[5]
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love,[6] the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?[7] who'd these fardels bear,[8]
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death —
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns — puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;[9]
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action. — Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! — Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

Oph. Good my lord,
How does your Honour for this many a day?

Ham. I humbly thank you; well, well, well.[10]

Oph. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.

[4] "This mortal *coil*" is the tumult and bustle of this mortal life; or, as Wordsworth has it, "the fretful stir unprofitable, and the fever of the world." Perhaps *coil* here means, also, the body.

[5] That is, the *consideration* that induces us to undergo the calamity of so long a life. This use of *respect* is very frequent. See page 101, note 16.

[6] So the folio; the quartos, *despis'd*. The folio reading is the stronger; for if a love *unprized* be hard to bear, a love *scorned* must be much harder.

[7] The allusion is to the term *quietus est*, used in settling accounts at exchequer audits. Thus, in Sir Thomas Overbury's character of *a Franklin*: "Lastly, to *end* him, he cares not when his end comes; he needs not feare his audit, for his *quietus* is in heaven."— *Bodkin* was the ancient term for a small dagger.

[8] So the folio; the quartos, "who would fardels bear." I prefer "who'd *these* fardels bear," because it makes what follows more continuous with what precedes; and it seems more natural that Hamlet should still keep his mind on the crosses already mentioned. *Fardel* is an old word for *burden*.

[9] The pale *complexion of grief*. See page 203, note 10.

[10] Thus the folio; the quartos have *well* but once. The repetition seems very apt and forcible, as suggesting the opposite of what the word means.

Ham. No, not I;
I never gave you aught.

Oph. My honour'd lord, I know right well you did;[11]
And, with them, words of so sweet breath compos'd
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for, to the noble mind,
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

Ham. Ha, ha! are you honest?

Oph. My lord?

Ham. Are you fair?[12]

Oph. What means your lordship?

Ham. That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.[13]

Oph. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Ham. Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd, than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

Oph. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Ham. You should not have believ'd me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock, but we shall relish of it. I loved you not.

Oph. I was the more deceived.

Ham. Get thee to a nunnery: why would'st thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck,[14] than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between

[11] The quartos have "*you* know" instead of "*I* know." The folio reading seems to have more of delicacy, and at least equal feeling.

[12] Here it is evident that the penetrating Hamlet perceives, from the strange and forced manner of Ophelia, that the sweet girl was not acting a part of her own, but was a decoy; and his after-speeches are not so much directed to her as to the listeners and spies. Such a discovery in a mood so anxious and irritable accounts for a certain harshness in him; and yet a wild up-working of love, sporting with opposites in a wilful, self-tormenting strain of irony, is perceptible throughout. — COLERIDGE.

[13] Your honesty should not admit your beauty to any discourse with it. — It should be noted, that in these speeches Hamlet refers, not to Ophelia personally, but to the sex in general. So, especially, when he says, "I have heard of your paintings too," he does not mean that Ophelia paints, but that the use of paintings is common with her sex.

[14] *At my beck* is *ready to come about me on a signal of permission*. Some would read "at my *back*."

Heaven and Earth? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

Oph. At home, my lord.

Ham. Let the doors be shut upon him; that he may play the fool nowhere but in's own house. Farewell.

Oph. O, help him, you sweet Heavens!

Ham. If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go; farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

Oph. O, heavenly powers, restore him!

Ham. I have heard of your paintings too, well enough: God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance.[15] Go to; I'll no more on't: it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. [*Exit.*

Oph. O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword;
Th'-expectancy and rose of the fair State,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,[16]
Th' observ'd of all observers, — quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me!
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Re-enter the KING *and* POLONIUS.

King. Love! his affections do not that way tend;
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
And I do doubt[17] the hatch and the disclose

[15] You mistake by *wanton* affectation, and pretend to mistake by *ignorance*.

[16] This is well explained in what Lady Percy says of her lost Hotspur, in 2 *King Henry IV.*, ii. 3: "By his light did all the chivalry of England move; he was indeed the glass wherein the noble youth did dress themselves."

[17] *Doubt* is very often used by the Poet in the sense of *fear* or *suspect*.

Will be some danger: which to prevent,
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: He shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply, the seas, and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart;
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

Pol. It shall do well: but yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. — How now, Ophelia!
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;
We heard it all. — My lord, do as you please;
But, if you hold it fit, after the play
Let his Queen-mother all alone intreat him
To show his grief: let her be round with him;[18]
And I'll be plac'd, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,
To England send him; or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

King. It shall be so:
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II. *The Same. A Hall in the Same.*

Enter Hamlet, *and certain Players.*[1]

Ham. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounc'd it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings;[2] who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a

[18] *Round* is *plain-spoken, downright.*

[1] "This dialogue of Hamlet with the players," says Coleridge, "is one of the happiest instances of Shakespeare's power of diversifying the scene while he is carrying on the plot."

[2] The ancient theatres were far from the commodious, elegant structures which later times have seen. The *pit* was, truly, what its name denotes, an unfloored space in the area of the house, sunk considerably beneath the level of the stage. Hence this part of the audience were called *groundlings.*

fellow whipp'd for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod:[3] pray you, avoid it.

1 *Play.* I warrant your Honour.

Ham. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.[4] Now, this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must, in your allowance,[5] o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, — and heard others praise, and that highly, — not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, Pagan, or Turk,[6] have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made the men,[7] and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

1 *Play.* I hope we have reform'd that indifferently with us.

Ham. O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them. For there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready. —

[*Exeunt Players.*

[3] *Termagaunt* is the name given in old romances to the tempestuous god of the Saracens. He is usually joined with *Mahound*, or Mahomet. John Florio calls him "*Termigisto*, a great boaster, quarreller, killer, tamer or ruler of the universe; the child of the earthquake and of the thunder, the brother of death." Hence this personage was introduced into the old Miracle-plays as a demon of outrageous and violent demeanour; or, as Bale says, "*Termagauntes* altogether, and very devils incarnate." The murder of the innocents was a favourite subject for a Miracle-play; and wherever Herod is introduced, he plays the part of a vaunting braggart, a tyrant of tyrants, and does indeed *outdo Termagant*.

[4] *Pressure* is *impression* here; as when, in i. 5: Hamlet says, "I'll wipe away all forms, all *pressures* past."

[5] *Allowance* is *estimation*. — "The censure of the which one" means the *judgment* of *one* of *which*. See page 476, note 3.

[6] *Turk* is from the quarto of 1603. The folio has "Christian, Pagan, or *Norman*," which is absurd. The other quartos, "Christian, pagan, *nor man*," which, to say the least, does not seem right.

[7] The old copies read "had made men;" which includes all men, that is, humanity itself, in the meaning of the passage. So that the article *the* is plainly needful, to limit the sense to the players in question. Malone proposed to read *them*, which would give the same meaning.

Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

How now, my lord! will the King hear this piece of work?
Pol. And the Queen too, and that presently.
Ham. Bid the players make haste.— [*Exit* POLONIUS.]
Will you two help to hasten them?
Both. We will, my lord. [*Exeunt* ROSE. *and* GUILD.
Ham. What, ho! Horatio!

Enter HORATIO.

Hor. Here, sweet lord, at your service.
Ham. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.
Hor. O, my dear lord,—
Ham. Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast,[8] but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?
No; let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee[9]
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. — Something too much of this. —
There is a play to-night before the King;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death.
I pr'ythee, when thou seest that act a-foot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe mine uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen;

[8] Shakespeare generally, though not always, uses *revenue* with the second syllable long, as here. See page 26, note 12.
[9] *Pregnant* is *ready, prompt.* — *Candied* is *sugared;* a tongue steeped in the sweetness of adulation. — *Thrift* is *profit;* the gold that flatterers lie for.

And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy.[10] Give him heedful note,
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
And, after, we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.
Hor. Well, my lord;
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.
Ham. They're coming to the play; I must be idle:[11]
Get you a place.

Danish March. A Flourish. Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and Others.*

King. How fares our cousin Hamlet?
Ham. Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-cramm'd.[12] You cannot feed capons so.
King. I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.
Ham. No, nor mine now.—[*To* POLON.] My lord, you play'd once i' the University, you say?
Pol. That did I, my lord; and was accounted a good actor.
Ham. And what did you enact?
Pol. I did enact Julius Cæsar: I was kill'd i' the Capitol; Brutus kill'd me.[13]
Ham. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.[14]—Be the players ready?
Ros. Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.
Queen. Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.
Ham. No, good mother; here's metal more attractive.
Pol. [*To the* KING.] O ho! do you mark that?
Ham. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?
[*Lying down at* OPHELIA'S *Feet.*
Oph. No, my lord.
Ham. I mean, my head upon your lap?

[10] Vulcan's workshop or *smithy*; *stith* being an *anvil.*
[11] Must *seem* idle; must behave as if his mind were purposeless, or intent upon nothing in particular.
[12] Because the chameleon was supposed to live on air. In fact, this and various other reptiles will live a long time without any visible food.—The King snuffs offence in "I eat the air, promise-cramm'd," as implying that he has not kept his promise to Hamlet.
[13] A Latin play on Cæsar's death was performed at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1582. Malone thinks that there was an English play on the same subject previous to Shakespeare's. Cæsar was killed in *Pompey's portico*, and not in the Capitol; but the error is at least as old as Chaucer's time.
[14] He *acted* the part of a brute.—The play on *Capitol* and *capital* is obvious enough.

Oph. Ay, my lord. You are merry, my lord.

Ham. Who, I?

Oph. Ay, my lord.

Ham. O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours.

Oph. Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

Ham. So long? Nay, then let the Devil wear black, 'fore I'll have a suit of sables.[15] O Heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by'r Lady, he must build churches then, or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse; whose epitaph is, *For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot.*[16]

Hautboys play. The Dumb-Show enters.

Enter a King and a Queen, very lovingly; the Queen embracing him. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck; lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a Fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exit. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner, with some two or three Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner wooes the Queen with gifts: she seems loth and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love. [Exeunt.

Oph. What means this, my lord?

Ham. Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief.[17]

Oph. Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

[15] Let the Devil put on mourning *before* I will. The old copies have *for* instead of *'fore;* which has been a great puzzle to the editors, since "a suit of sables" is black. *'Fore* is Warburton's correction, and is clearly right, notwithstanding so many have rejected it.

[16] The *Hobby-horse* was a part of the old Morris-dance, which was used in the May-games. It was the figure of a horse fastened round a man's waist, the man's legs going through the horse's body, and enabling him to walk, but covered by a long footcloth; while false legs appeared where those of the man's should be, astride the horse. The Puritans waged a furious war against the Morris-dance; which caused the Hobby-horse to be left out of it: hence the burden of a song, which passed into a proverb. The plays of the times have many allusions to it.

[17] *Miching mallecho* is lurking mischief, or evil doing. To *mich*, for to skulk, to lurk, was an old English verb in common use in Shakespeare's time; and *mallecho* or *malhecho*, *misdeed*, he borrowed from the Spanish.

Enter Prologue.

Ham. We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all.

Oph. Will he tell us what this show meant?

Ham. Ay.

Prologue. *For us, and for our tragedy,*
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently. [Exit.

Ham. Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

Oph. 'Tis brief, my lord.

Ham. As woman's love.

Enter a King and a Queen.

P. King. *Full thirty times hath Phœbus' cart gone round*[18]
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground;
And thirty dozen moons with borrow'd sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been,
Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our hands,
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

P. Queen. *So many journeys may the Sun and Moon*
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!
But, woe is me! you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer, and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must;
For women's fear and love hold quantity;
In neither aught, or in extremity.
Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;
And as my love is siz'd, my fear is so:
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

P. King. *'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;*
My operant powers their functions leave to do:
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, belov'd; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou —

P. Queen. *O, confound the rest!*
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second, but who kill'd the first.

[18] *Cart, car,* and *chariot* were used indiscriminately. — "The style," says Coleridge, "of the interlude here is distinguished from the real dialogue by rhyme, as in the first interview with the players by epic verse."

Ham. [*Aside.*] Wormwood, wormwood!

P. Queen. *The instances that second marriage move*
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love:
A second time I kill my husband dead,
When second husband kisses me in bed.
P. King. *I do believe you think what now you speak;*
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth, but poor validity;
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,
But fall, unshaken, when they mellow be.
Most necessary 'tis that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt:
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy:[19]
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
This world is not for aye; nor 'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change,
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark, his favourite flies:
The poor advanc'd makes friends of enemies:
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend;
For who not needs shall never lack a friend;
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his enemy.
But, orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contráry run,
That our devices still are overthrown;
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own:
So, think thou wilt no second husband wed;
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.
P. Queen. *Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light!*
Sport and repose lock from me day and night!
To desperation turn my trust and hope!
An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope![20]
Each opposite, that blanks the face of joy,[21]
Meet what I would have well, and it destroy!

[19] *Enactures* are *determinations;* what they *enact.*
[20] *Anchor* is for *anchoret,* an old word for *hermit.*
[21] To *blank* the face is to make it *white* or *pale;* to take the blood out of it.

Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

Ham. [*To* OPH.] If she should break it now!

P. King. *'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile:*
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep. [Sleeps.

P. Queen. *Sleep rock thy brain;*
And never come mischance between us twain! [Exit.

Ham. Madam, how like you this play?

Queen. The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

Ham. O, but she'll keep her word.

King. Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?

Ham. No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' the world.

King. What do you call the play?

Ham. The mouse-trap. Marry, how? Tropically.[22] This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the Duke's name;[23] his wife, Baptista. You shall see anon: 'tis a knavish piece of work; but what of that? your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not: let the gall'd jade wince, our withers are unwrung.[24] —

Enter LUCIANUS.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

Oph. You are as good as a chorus, my lord.[25]

Ham. I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.

Oph. You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

Ham. Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces and begin. Come: — The croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.

Luc. *Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit and time agreeing;*

[22] *Tropically* is *figuratively*, or in the way of *trope*.

[23] All the old copies read thus. Yet in the dumb-show we have, "Enter a *King* and Queen;" and at the end of this speech, "Lucianus, nephew to the *king*." This seeming inconsistency, however, may be reconciled. Though the interlude is the *image* of the murder of the *Duke* of Vienna, or in other words founded upon that story, the Poet might make the principal person in *his fable* a *king*. *Baptista* is always the name of a man.

[24] The allusion is to a horse wincing as the saddle galls his withers. See page 269, note 2.

[25] The use to which Shakespeare put the *chorus* may be seen in *King Henry V.* Every motion or puppet-show was accompanied by an *interpreter* or showman.

Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,[26]
Thy natural magic and dire property,
On wholesome life usurp immediately.
[Pours the Poison into the Sleeper's Ears.

Ham. He poisons him i' the garden for 's estate. His name's Gonzago: the story is extant, and writ in choice Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

Oph. The King rises.

Ham. What, frighted with false fire!

Queen. How fares my lord?

Pol. Give o'er the play.

King. Give me some light: — away!

All. Lights, lights, lights!
[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET *and* HORATIO.

Ham. Why, let the strucken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
Thus runs the world away. —
Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers,[27] (if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me,) with two Provincial roses on my raz'd shoes,[28] get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?[29]

Hor. Half a share.[30]

Ham. A whole one, ay.[31]
For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was

[26] Poisonous weeds were supposed to be more poisonous if gathered in the night. *Hecate* was the name given to the Queen of the witches; and her *banning* or cursing brought the poison to the highest intensity.

[27] Alluding, probably, to a custom which the London players seem to have had in Shakespeare's time, of flaunting it in gaudy apparel, and with *plumes* in their caps, the more the better. Some one calling himself a Soldier wrote to Secretary Walsingham in 1586, complaining, — "It is a woeful sight, to see two hundred *proud players jet in their silks*, where five hundred poor people starve in the streets." — To *turn Turk* with any one was to *desert* or *betray* him, or turn traitor to him. A common phrase of the time.

[28] *Provincial* roses took their name from *Provins*, in Lower Brie, and not from *Provence*. *Raz'd* shoes are most probably *embroidered* shoes. To *race*, or *raze*, was to *stripe*. So in Markham's *County Farm*, speaking of wafer cakes: "Baking all together between two irons, having within them many *raced* and checkered draughts after the manner of small squares."

[29] "A *fellowship* in a *cry* of players" is a *partnership* in a *company* of players. The Poet repeatedly uses *cry* thus for *set*, *pack*, or *troop*.

[30] The players were paid not by salaries, but by *shares* or portions of the profit, according to merit.

[31] The old copies, and modern editions generally, have *I* instead of *ay*. The affirmative *ay* was printed *I* in the Poet's time. See page 489, note 5.

Of Jove himself;[82] and now reigns here
A very, very — peacock.[83]

Hor. You might have rhym'd.[84]

Ham. O, good Horatio! I'll take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

Hor. Very well, my lord.

Ham. Upon the talk of the poisoning, —

Hor. I did very well note him.

Ham. Ah, ha! — Come; some music! come; the recorders![85]

For if the King like not the comedy,
Why then, belike, — he likes it not, perdy.[86] —
Come; some music!

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Guil. Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

Ham. Sir, a whole history.

Guil. The King, sir, —

Ham. Ay, sir, what of him?

Guil. — is, in his retirement, marvellous distemper'd.

Ham. With drink, sir?

Guil. No, my lord, with choler.

Ham. Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor; for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into more choler.

Guil. Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.

Ham. I am tame, sir: — pronounce.

Guil. The Queen your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

Ham. You are welcome.

Guil. Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome

[82] The meaning is, that Denmark was robbed of a king who had the majesty of Jove. — Hamlet calls Horatio Damon, in allusion to the famous friendship of Damon and Pythias.

[83] The old copies have *paiock* and *paiocke*. There being no such word known, Pope changed it to *peacock*; which is probably right, the allusion being, perhaps, to the fable of the crow that decked itself with peacock's feathers. Or the meaning may be the same as explained by Florio, thus: "*Pavoneggiare*, to court it, to brave it, to *peacockize* it, to wantonise it, to get up and down fondly, gazing upon himself as a peacock does."

[84] If Hamlet had rhymed, *peacock* would have been *ass*.

[85] The recorder was a soft-toned instrument, something like the flute So, in *Paradise Lost*, i.: "They move in perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood of flutes and soft *recorders*." To *record* was also used for to *warble* or *sing*. Thus, in Drayton's *Eclogues:* "Fair Philomel, night-music of the Spring, sweetly *records* her tuneful harmony."

[86] *Perdy* is a corruption of the French *par Dieu*.

answer, I will do your mother's commandment; if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

Ham. Sir, I cannot.

Guil. What, my lord?

Ham. Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseas'd: but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command; or rather, as you say, my mother: therefore no more, but to the matter. My mother, you say, —

Ros. Then thus she says: Your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

Ham. O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! — But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? impart.

Ros. She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

Ham. We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

Ros. My lord, you once did love me.

Ham. So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.[37]

Ros. Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do, surely, bar the door of your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

Ham. Sir, I lack advancement.

Ros. How can that be, when you have the voice of the King himself for your succession in Denmark?

Ham. Ay, sir, but *While the grass grows*, — The proverb is something musty.[38]

Re-enter Players with Recorders.

O, the recorders: — let me see one. — To withdraw with you:[39] why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?[40]

Guil. O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.[41]

[37] This is explained by a clause in the *Church Catechism*: "To keep my hands from *picking* and *stealing*." — The quartos have "*And* do still," instead of "*So I* do still." The latter reading gives a different sense, *so* being emphatic, and strongly ironical.

[38] The "musty proverb" probably is, "While the grass grows the horse will starve."

[39] To *withdraw* was sometimes used as a hunting term, meaning to *draw back*, to leave the scent or trail.

[40] "To *recover the wind* of me" is a term borrowed from hunting, and means to take advantage of the animal pursued, by getting to the windward of it, that it may not scent its pursuers. — *Toil* is *snare* or *trap*.

[41] Hamlet may well say, "I do not well understand that." The meaning, however, seems to be, — If I am using an unmannerly boldness with you, it is my love that makes me do so.

Ham. I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil. My lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you.

Guil. Believe me, I cannot.

Ham. I do beseech you.

Guil. I know no touch of it, my lord.

Ham. 'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.[42]

Guil. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

Ham. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood! do you think I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me,[43] you cannot play upon me. —

Enter POLONIUS.

God bless you, sir!

Pol. My lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.

Ham. Do you see yonder cloud, that's almost in shape of a camel?

Pol. By the Mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

Ham. Methinks it is like a weasel.

Pol. It is back'd like a weasel.

Ham. Or like a whale?

Pol. Very like a whale.

Ham. Then will I come to my mother by-and-by. — They fool me to the top of my bent.[44] — I will come by-and-by.

Pol. I will say so. [*Exit.*

Ham. *By-and-by* is easily said. — Leave me, friends. —

[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET.

[42] The *ventages* are the holes of the pipe. *Stops* signifies the mode of stopping the ventages so as to make the notes. — The folio has "most *excellent* music."

[43] Hamlet keeps up the allusion to a musical instrument. The *frets* of a lute or guitar are the ridges crossing the finger-board, upon which the strings are pressed or *stopped*. A quibble is intended on *fret*.

[44] They *humour* me to the *full-height* of my inclination. Polonius has been using the method, common in the treatment of crazy people, of assenting to all that Hamlet says. This is what Hamlet refers to.

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When church-yards yawn,[45] and Hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother. —
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:[46]
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites:
How in my words soever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent![47] [*Exit.*

SCENE III. *The Same. A Room in the Same.*

Enter the KING, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. I like him not; nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you:
I your commission will forthwith despatch,
And he to England shall along with you.
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.
Guil. We will ourselves provide.
Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep those many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your Majesty.
Ros. The single and peculiar life is bound,
With all the strength and armour of the mind,
To keep itself from 'noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest
The lives of many. The cease of Majesty
Dies not alone;[1] but like a gulf doth draw
What's near it with it: 'tis a massy wheel,
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,

[45] Church-yards *yawn* to let forth the ghosts, who did all their walking in the night. And the crimes which darkness so often covers might well be spoken of as caused by the nocturnal contagion of Hell.

[46] Nero is aptly referred to here, as he was the murderer of his mother, Agrippina. It may be worth noting that the name of the King in this play is *Claudius*; and that, after the death of Domitius her husband, Agrippina married with her uncle the Emperor Claudius.

[47] To *shend* is to *injure*, whether by reproof, blows, or otherwise. Shakespeare generally uses *shent* for reproved, threatened with angry words. "To give his words *seals*" is therefore to carry his punishment beyond *reproof*. The allusion is the sealing a deed to render it effective.

[1] Tautological in word, but not in sense. The *death* of Majesty *comes* not alone.

To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortis'd and adjoin'd; which when it falls,[2]
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boisterous ruin. Ne'er alone
Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.
King. Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;
For we will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.
Ros. Guil. We will haste us. [*Exeunt.*

Enter POLONIUS.

Pol. My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.
Behind the arras I'll convey myself,
To hear the process: I'll warrant she'll tax him home;
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since Nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech of vantage.[3] Fare you well, my liege:
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.
King. Thanks, dear my lord.—
[*Exit* POLONIUS.
O, my offence is rank, it smells to Heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder!—Pray can I not:
Though inclination be as sharp as will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;[4]
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet Heavens,
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,—
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up:
My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? *Forgive me my foul murder?*—

[2] This doubling of the subject, as *which* and *it*, in relative clauses, has been noted before. See page 39, note 2.

[3] Speech having an advantage in that Nature makes the speakers partial to each other. This favours the conclusion that the Queen was not privy and consenting to the murder of Hamlet's father. Both the King and Polonius have some distrust of her.

[4] Though I were not only willing, but strongly inclined to pray, my guilt would prevent me. I suspect we ought to read, with Hamner "as sharp as 'twill"

That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition, and my Queen.
May one be pardon'd, and retain th' offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove-by justice;
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling, — there the action lies
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence. What then? what rests?
Try what repentance can? what can it not?
Yet what can it when one can not repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul,[5] that, struggling to be free,
Art more engag'd! Help, angels! make assay:
Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!
All may be well.[6] [*Retires and kneels.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;
And now I'll do't: — and so he goes to Heaven;
And so am I reveng'd: — That would be scann'd:[7]
A villain kills my father; and, for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To Heaven.
Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly, full of bread;
With all his crimes broad-blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands who knows save Heaven?
But, in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him: and am I, then, reveng'd,
To take him in the purging of his soul,

[5] Alluding to an old mode of catching birds, by spreading upon the twigs, where they are likely to light, a sticky substance called *bird-lime*. The birds were thus caught and held by the feet, and the more they tried to get away, the more they couldn't. The thing grew to be a common figure for any sort of snare. Shakespeare often uses it so.

[6] The final — "All may be well" is remarkable; — the degree of merit attributed by the self-flattering soul to its own struggles, though baffled, and to the indefinite half promise, half command, to persevere in religious duties. — COLERIDGE.

[7] In the speech of our day, "this *should* be scann'd." I have already noted more than once, that in the Poet's time the auxiliaries *could*, *should*, *would*, &c., had not become fully differentiated, and so were often used indifferently.

When he is fit and season'd for his passage?
No.
Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent:[8]
When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage;
At gaming, swearing; or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't:
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at Heaven;
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As Hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.[9] [*Exit.*

The KING *rises and advances.*

King. My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
Words without thoughts never to Heaven go. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. *The Same. Another Room in the Same.*

Enter the QUEEN *and* POLONIUS.

Pol. He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with;
And that your Grace hath screen'd and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll sconce me even here.
Pray you, be round with him.
Ham. [*Within.*] Mother, mother, mother!
Queen. I'll warrant you;
Fear me not: withdraw; I hear him coming.
[POLONIUS *hides himself.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. Now, mother, what's the matter?
Queen. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.
Ham. Mother, you have my father much offended.
Queen. Come, come; you answer with an idle tongue.
Ham. Go, go; you question with a wicked tongue.
Queen. Why, how now, Hamlet!
Ham. What's the matter now?
Queen. Have you forgot me?
Ham. No, by the rood, not so:[1]

[8] That is, more horrid *seizure*, *grasp*, or *hold*. *Hent* was often used as a verb in the same sense.

[9] Hamlet here flies off to an *ideal* revenge, in order to quiet his filial feelings without violating his conscience; effecting a compromise between them, by *adjourning* a purpose which, as a man, he dare not execute, nor, as a son, abandon. He afterwards asks Horatio,—"Is't not *perfect conscience*, to quit him with this arm?" which confirms the view here taken, as it shows that even then his mind was not at rest on that score.

[1] *Rood* is an old word for *cross*. It was often used, as here, to intensify the expression.

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And — would it were not so! — you are my mother.
Queen. Nay, then I'll set those to you that can speak.
Ham. Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge:
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.
Queen. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me? —
Help, help, ho!
Pol. [*Behind.*] What, ho! help, help, help!
Ham. [*Drawing.*] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead! [*Makes a pass through the Arras.*
Pol. [*Behind.*] O, I am slain! [*Falls, and dies.*
Queen. O me! what hast thou done?
Ham. Nay, I know not: Is it the King?
Queen. O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!
Ham. A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.
Queen. *As kill a king!*
Ham. Ay, lady, 'twas my word. —
[*He lifts up the Arras and sees* POLONIUS.
Thou wretched, rash-intruding fool, farewell!
I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune;
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger. —
Leave wringing of your hands: Peace! sit you down,
And let me wring your heart: for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff;
If damned custom have not braz'd it so,
That it is proof and bulwark against sense.
Queen. What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?
Ham. Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul;[2] and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words! Heaven's face doth glow,

[2] *Contraction* here means the *marriage contract;* of which Hamlet holds religion to be the life and soul, insomuch that without this it is but as a lifeless body, and must soon become a nuisance. Rather superstitious, perhaps; but it should be considered that this play was written nearly three hundred years ago, when marriage was more a "despotism" than it is now.

Yea, this solidity and compound mass,[3]
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.
Queen. Ah me! what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?[4]
Ham. Look here upon this picture, and on this;
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.[5]
See what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;[6]
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury[7]
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother.[8] Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor?[9] Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,
Else could you not have motion; but, sure, that sense
Is apoplex'd: for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd,
But it reserv'd some quantity of choice,[10]

[3] This solid globe, the Earth. Hamlet in his high-wrought stress of passion, kindling as he goes on, makes the fine climax, that not only the heavenly powers burn with indignation, but even the gross beings of this world are smitten with grief and horror, as if the day of judgment were at hand.

[4] The *index*, or table of contents, was formerly placed at the beginning of books. In *Othello*, ii 1, we have, "an *index* and obscure *prologue* to the history of lust and foul thoughts."

[5] *Counterfeit presentment*, or *counterfeit* simply, was used for *likeness*. See page 140, note 20. It is to be supposed that Hamlet wears a miniature of his father, while his mother wears one of the present King.

[6] The statues of Jupiter represented him as the most intellectual of all the gods, as Apollo was the most beautiful; while in Mercury we have the ideal of swiftness and despatch.

[7] *Station* does not here mean the spot where any one is placed, but the *act of standing*, the *attitude*. So, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 3: "Her motion and her *station* are as one."

[8] The allusion is to the blasted ears of corn that destroyed the full and good ears, in Pharaoh's dream; *Genesis* xli. 5–7.

[9] To *batten* is to *feed rankly* or *grossly*; it is usually applied to the fattening of animals.

[10] Sense was never so *dominated* by the delusions of *insanity*, but that it still retained some *power* of choice.

To serve in such a difference. What devil was't,
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?[11]
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.[12]
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious Hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,[13]
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame,
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
And reason panders will.

Queen. O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.[14]

Ham. Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,[15]
Stew'd in corruption,—

Queen. O, speak to me no more!
These words like daggers enter in mine ears:
No more, sweet Hamlet.

Ham. A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord; a Vice of kings;[16]
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket!

Queen. No more!

Ham. A king of shreds and patches,—

Enter the Ghost.[17]

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards!—What would your gracious figure?

[11] *Hoodman-blind* is the old game of *blindman's-buff*.

[12] To *mope* is to be *dull and stupid*.

[13] *Mutine* for *mutiny*. This is the old form of the verb. Shakespeare calls *mutineers mutines* in a subsequent scene.

[14] "*Grained* spots" are spots *ingrained*, or *dyed in the grain*.

[15] *Enseamed* is a term borrowed from falconry. It is well known that the *seam* of any animal was the fat or tallow; and a hawk was said to be *enseamed* when she was too fat or gross for flight.

[16] An allusion to the old Vice or jester, a stereotyped character in the Moral-plays, which were going out of use in the Poet's time. The Vice wore a motley or patchwork dress; hence the *shreds and patches* applied in this instance. See page 233, note 15.

[17] When the Ghost goes out, Hamlet says, — "Look, how it steals away! my father, *in his habit as he liv'd*." It has been much argued whether the

Queen. Alas, he's mad!
Ham. Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, laps'd in time and passion,[18] lets go by
Th' important acting of your dread command?
O, say!
Ghost. Do not forget: This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost-blunted purpose.
But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul!
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works:[19]
Speak to her, Hamlet.
Ham. How is it with you, lady?
Queen. Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,
And with th' incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in th' alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,[20]
Starts up, and stands on end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?
Ham. On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable.[21] — Do not look upon me;
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern affects:[22] then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears, perchance, for blood.
Queen. To whom do you speak this?
Ham. Do you see nothing there?
Queen. Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.
Ham. Nor did you nothing hear?
Queen. No, nothing but ourselves.

Ghost should wear armour here, as in former scenes. The question is set at rest by the stage-direction in the first quarto: "Enter the Ghost, *in his night-gown.*" See, however, note 23, of this scene.

[18] The sense appears to be, having failed *in respect* both of time and of purpose. Or it may be, having allowed passion to cool by lapse of time.

[19] *Conceit* again for *conception, imagination.*

[20] That is, like excrements *alive*, or having *life in them*. *Hair*, nails feathers, &c., were called *excrements*, as being without life.

[21] Would put sense and understanding into them. The use of *capable* for *susceptible, intelligent*, is not peculiar to Shakespeare.

[22] The old copies have *effects*, which was apt to be misprinted for *affects*. The latter was often used for *affections*, which might signify any mood or temper of mind looking to action. Mr. White and some other late editors retain *effects*, but I can find no meaning in it that will run smooth with the context. Hamlet is afraid lest the "piteous action" of the Ghost should make his stern mood or temper of revenge give place to tenderness, so that he will see the ministry enjoined upon him in a false light, and go to shedding tears instead of blood.

Ham. Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!
My father, in his habit as he liv'd!
Look where he goes, even now, out at the portal! [*Exit Ghost.*

Queen. This is the very coinage of your brain:
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.[23]

Ham. Ecstasy!
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music. 'Tis not madness
That I have utter'd: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to Heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue;
For in the fatness of these pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg;
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.[24]

Queen. O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Ham. O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to my uncle's bed;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat
Of habits evil, is angel yet in this,[25]
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on.

[23] The Ghost in this scene, as also in the banquet-scene of *Macbeth*, is plainly what we should call a *subjective* ghost; that is, existing only in the heated imagination of the beholder. As the Queen says, insanity is very fertile in such "bodiless creations." It is not so with the apparition in the former scenes, as the ghost is there seen by other persons. To be sure, it was part of the old belief, that ghosts could, if they chose, make themselves visible only to those with whom they were to deal; but this is just what we mean by *subjective*. The ancients could not take the idea of subjective visions, as we use the term. For this reason I have long thought that the introduction of the Ghost on the stage in this scene ought to be discontinued.

[24] To *curb* is to *curve*, *bend*, or *truckle*; from the French *courber*.

[25] The meaning is, that custom *eats out* all sense or *consciousness* of evil habits. The old copies have *devil* instead of *evil*; but the hopeless disagreement of editors about it, and the hard straining to justify it, show that *devil* can hardly be right. On the other hand, *evil* makes the whole passage orderly, coherent, and apt. Though custom is a monster in that it takes away all sense of evil habits, yet it is an angel in this respect, that it also works in a manner equally favourable to good actions.

For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either curb the Devil or throw him out[26]
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night;
And when you are desirous to be bless'd,
I'll blessing beg of you. — For this same lord,
[*Pointing to* POLONIUS
I do repent: but Heaven hath pleas'd it so,[27]
To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.[28]
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night. —
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind. —
One word more, good lady.

Queen. What shall I do?

Ham. Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed;
Pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his mouse;[29]
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,[30]
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know;
For who, that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,[31]
Such dear concernings hide? who would do so?
No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep,[32]
And break your own neck down.

Queen. Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

[26] *Curb* is wanting in all the old copies. Sense and verse alike require that or some equivalent word.

[27] It hath pleas'd Heaven so to punish.

[28] The pronoun *their* refers to *Heaven*, which is here a collective noun, put for the *heavenly powers*.

[29] *Mouse* was a term of endearment. Thus Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy:* "Pleasant names may be invented, bird, *mouse*, lamb, puss, pigeon."

[30] *Reeky* and *reechy* are the same word, and applied to any vaporous exhalation.

[31] A *paddock* is a *toad;* a *gib*, a *cat*. See page 256, note 9.

[32] To *try conclusions* is the old phrase for *trying experiments*, or putting a thing to the proof. — The passage alludes, apparently, to some fable or story now quite forgotten. Sir John Suckling, in one of his letters, refers to "the story of the jackanapes and the partridges."

Ham. I must to England; you know that?
Queen. Alack,
I had forgot: 'tis so concluded on.
Ham. There's letters seal'd: and my two school-fellows,—
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,—
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way,
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petar;[88] and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the Moon. O, 'tis most sweet,
When in one line two crafts directly meet.—
This man shall set me packing:
I'll lug the [corse] into the neighbour room.—
Mother, good night.—Indeed, this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.—
Good night, mother.

[*Exeunt severally;* HAMLET *dragging in* POLONIUS.

ACT IV. SCENE I. *Elsinore. A Room in the Castle.*

Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. There's matter in these sighs,—these profound heaves,—
You must translate; 'tis fit we understand them.
Where is your son?
Queen. Bestow this place on us a little while.—
[*Exeunt* ROSE. *and* GUILD.
Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to-night!
King. What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?
Queen. Mad as the sea and wind when both contend
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
He whips his rapier out, and cries *A rat! a rat!*
And in his brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.

[88] *Hoist* for *hoised.* To *hoyse* was the old verb. A *petar* was a kind of mortar used to blow up gates. — *It shall go hard* means *I will try hard.* See page 134, note 8.

King. O heavy deed!
It had been so with us, had we been there:
His liberty is full of threats to all;
To you yourself, to us, to every one.
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?
It will be laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt[1]
This mad young man: but so much was our love,
We would not understand what was most fit;
But, like the owner of a foul disease,
To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life.[2] Where is he gone?

Queen. To draw apart the body he hath kill'd;
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base,[3]
Shows itself pure: he weeps for what is done.

King. O Gertrude, come away!
The Sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,
But we will ship him hence; and this vile deed
We must, with all our majesty and skill,
Both countenance and excuse. — Ho, Guildenstern!

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Friends both, go join you with some further aid.
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him:
Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this. —
[*Exeunt* ROSE. *and* GUILD
Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends,
And let them know both what we mean to do,
And what's untimely done: so, haply slander —
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,
As level as the cannon to his blank,[4]
Transports his poison'd shot — may miss our name,
And hit the woundless air. — O, come away!
My soul is full of discord and dismay. [*Exeunt.*

[1] Out of *haunt* means out of *company*.

[2] Certain diseases appear to be attended with an instinct of concealment. I have heard of persons dying of external cancer; yet they had kept so secret about it that their nearest friends had not suspected it.

[3] Shakespeare, with a license not unusual among his contemporaries, uses *ore* for *gold*, and *mineral* for *mine*. Bullokar and Blount both define "*or* or *ore*, *gold*; of a golden colour." And the *Cambridge Dictionary*, 1594, under the Latin word *mineralia*, shows how the English *mineral* came to be used for a mine.

[4] The *blank* was the *mark* at which shots or arrows were aimed. — The words, "so, haply, slander," are not in any old copy, but were supplied by Theobald as necessary to the sense.

SCENE II. *The Same. Another Room in the Same.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. Safely stowed.

Ros. and Guil. [*Within.*] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

Ham. What noise? who calls on Hamlet? O, here they come.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Ros. What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

Ham. Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

Ros. Tell us where 'tis; that we may take it thence, And bear it to the chapel.

Ham. Do not believe it.

Ros. Believe what?

Ham. That I can keep your counsel, and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge, what replication should be made by the son of a king?

Ros. Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

Ham. Ay, sir; that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end: he keeps them, as an ape doth nuts in the corner of his jaw;[1] first mouth'd to be last swallowed: When he needs what you have glean'd, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

Ros. I understand you not, my lord.

Ham. I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.[2]

Ros. My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the King.

Ham. The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body.[3] The King is a thing —

Guil. A thing, my lord!

Ham. — of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after.[4] [*Exeunt.*

[1] The words, "as an ape doth nuts," are from the quarto of 1603. The other quartos merely have, "like an *apple;*" the folio has "*like* an ape," only.

[2] Perhaps this is best explained by a passage in *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 2: "A jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it, never in the tongue of him that makes it."

[3] Hamlet is purposely talking riddles, in order to tease and puzzle his questioners. The meaning of this riddle, to the best of my guessing, is, that the king's body is with the king, but not the king's soul: he's a king without kingliness.

[4] "Hide fox, and all after," was a juvenile sport, most probably what is now called *hide and seek.*

SCENE III. *The Same. Another Room in the Same.*

Enter the KING, *attended.*

King. I've sent to seek him, and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He's lov'd of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;
And where 'tis so, th' offender's scourge is weigh'd,
But never the offence.[1] To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause: diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are reliev'd,
Or not at all. —

Enter ROSENCRANTZ.

How now! what hath befall'n?

Ros. Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

King. But where is he?

Ros. Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

King. Bring him before us.

Ros. Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

Enter HAMLET *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

Ham. At supper.

King. At supper! where?

Ham. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.[2] Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else, to fat us; and we fat ourselves for maggots: Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service; two dishes, but to one table: that's the end.

King. Alas, alas!

Ham. A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

King. What dost thou mean by this?

Ham. Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through a beggar.[3]

[1] Who like not what their judgment approves, for they have none, but what pleases their eyes; and in this case the criminal's punishment is considered, but not his crime.

[2] Alluding, no doubt, to the Diet of Worms, which Protestants regarded as a convocation of *politicians*.

[3] Alluding to the royal *journeys* of state, styled *progresses*.

King. Where is Polonius?

Ham. In Heaven; send thither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But, indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

King. [*To Attendants.*] Go seek him there.

Ham. He will stay till ye come. [*Exeunt Attendants.*

King. Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,—
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done,—must send thee hence
With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,
Th' associates tend,[4] and every thing is bent
For England.

Ham. For England!

King. Ay, Hamlet.

Ham. Good.

King. So it is, if thou knew'st our purposes.

Ham. I see a cherub that sees them.[5]—But, come; for England!—Farewell, dear mother.

King. Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Ham. My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother.—Come, for England! [*Exit.*

King. Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;
Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night:
Away! for every thing is seal'd and done
That else leans on th' affair: pray you, make haste.—
[*Exeunt* ROSE. *and* GUILD.
And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught,
(As my great power thereof may give thee sense;
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us,) thou may'st not coldly set[6]
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters cónjuring to that effect,[7]
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun. [*Exit.*

[4] The associates of your voyage *are waiting.*—"The wind *at help*" means the wind *serves*, or is right, to forward you.

[5] Hamlet means that he divines them, or has an inkling of them.

[6] To *set* formerly meant to *estimate*. To *set* much or little by a thing, is to *estimate* it much or little.

[7] In Shakespeare's time the two senses of *conjure* had not acquired each its peculiar way of pronouncing the word. Here *conjuring* has the *first* syllable long, with the sense of *earnestly entreating*.

SCENE IV. *A Plain in Denmark.*

Enter FORTINBRAS, *a Captain, and Forces, marching.*

For. Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish King;
Tell him that by his license Fortinbras
Claims the conveyance of a promis'd march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.
If that his Majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye;[1]
And let him know so.
Cap. I will do't, my lord.
For. Go softly on. [*Exeunt* FORTINBRAS *and Forces.*

Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, &c.

Ham. Good sir, whose powers are these?
Cap. They are of Norway, sir.
Ham. How purpos'd, sir, I pray you?
Cap. Against some part of Poland.
Ham. Who commands them, sir?
Cap. The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.
Ham. Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,
Or for some frontier?
Cap. Truly to speak, sir, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.
Ham. Why, then the Polack never will defend it.
Cap. Yes, 'tis already garrison'd.
Ham. Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate the question of this straw:
This is th' imposthume of much wealth and peace,[2]
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. — I humbly thank you, sir.
Cap. God b' wi' you, sir. [*Exit Captain.*
Ros. Will't please you go, my lord?
Ham. I'll be with you straight. Go a little before. —
[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET.
How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,

[1] In the *Regulations for the Establishment of the Queen's Household*, 1627: "All such as doe service *in the queen's eye.*" And in *The Establishment of Prince Henry's Household*, 1610: "All such as doe service *in the prince's eye.*"

[2] *Imposthume* was in common use for *abscess* in the Poet's time

If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd. Now, whether it be
Beastial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th' event, —
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom,
And ever three parts coward, — I do not know
Why yet I live to say *This thing's to do;*
Sith I have cause and will, and strength and means,
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
Witness this army, of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince;
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,
Makes mouths at the invisible event;
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I, then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,[3]
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds; fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause;
Which is not tomb enough and continent[4]
To hide the slain? — O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! *Exit*

SCENE V. *Elsinore. A Room in the Castle.*

Enter the QUEEN *and* HORATIO.

Queen. I will not speak with her.
Hor. She is importunate, indeed distract;
Her mood will needs be pitied.

[3] Provocations which excite both my reason and my passions to vengeance.

[4] *Continent* means that which contains or encloses. "If there be no fulnesse, then is the *continent* greater than the content." — *Bacon's Advancement of Learning.*

Queen. What would she have?

Hor. She speaks much of her father; says she hears
There's tricks i' the world; and hems, and beats her heart;
Spurns enviously at straws;[1] speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,[2]
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;
Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.[3]
'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

Queen. Let her come in. — [*Exit* HORATIO.
To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:[4]
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

Re-enter HORATIO, *with* OPHELIA.[5]

Oph. Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark?[6]

Queen. How now, Ophelia!

Oph. [Sings.] *How should I your true love know*
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.[7]

Queen. Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

Oph. Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

[1] *Kicks spitefully* at straws. Such was the common use of *spurn* in the Poet's time. So, in *The Merchant of Venice*, i. 3: "And foot me as you *spurn* a stranger cur over your threshold." "And in *Julius Cæsar*, iii. 1: "I *spurn* thee like a cur out of my way." — It has been repeatedly noted that *envy* and its derivatives were used in the sense of *malice*.

[2] *Collection* is *inference* or *conjecture*. — *Aim* is *guess*. See page 439, note 24.

[3] *Unhappily* is here used in the sense of *mischievously*; a frequent usage. — In the folio, the next two lines are printed as part of the Queen's speech. The quartos assign them to Horatio, and the sense of them clearly favours that order.

[4] Shakespeare is not singular in the use of *amiss* as a substantive. 'Each *toy*" is each *trifle*.

[5] In the quarto of 1603, this stage-direction is, "Enter Ophelia, playing on a lute, and her hair down, singing."

[6] There is no part of this play in its representation on the stage more pathetic than this scene; which, I suppose, proceeds from the utter insensibility Ophelia has to her own misfortunes. A great sensibility, or none at all, seems to produce the same effects. In the latter case the audience supply what is wanting, and with the former they sympathize. — Sir J. REYNOLDS.

[7] These were the badges of pilgrims. The *cockle shell* was an emblem of their intention to go beyond sea. The habit, being held sacred, was often assumed as a disguise in love-adventures.

[Sings.] *He is dead and gone, lady,*
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

Queen. Nay, but, Ophelia, —

Oph. Pray you, mark.

[Sings.] *White his shroud as the mountain snow,*

Enter the KING.

Queen. Alas, look here, my lord.

Oph. [Sings.] *Larded with sweet flowers;*[8]
Which bewept to the grave did go,
With true-love showers.

King. How do you, pretty lady?

Oph. Well, God 'ield you![9] They say the owl was a baker's daughter.[10] Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!

King. Conceit upon her father.

Oph. Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

[Sings.] *To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,*
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.

The remaining Stanzas to be omitted in Class.[11]

[*Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,*
And dupp'd the chamber door;[12]
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.

King. Pretty Ophelia!

Oph. Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't:

[Sings.] *By Gis and by Saint Charity,*[13]
Alack, and fie for shame!

[8] *Larded* is *garnished.*

[9] God *yield*, or *reward* you. See page 92, note 8.

[10] There was a tradition that the Saviour went into a baker's shop and asked for some bread. The baker put some dough in the oven to bake for Him, and was rebuked by his daughter for doing so. For this wickedness the daughter was transformed into an owl.

[11] The stanzas which follow are so essential to the right conception of Ophelia that I dare not cut them out of the text. I therefore bracket them, and mark them for omission in class. See the *Preface* to this volume.

[12] To *dup* is to *do up*, as to *don* is to *do on.*

[13] This use of *Gis* has not been accounted for. Probably it is a corruption, or perhaps a disguise, of the Saviour's name. *Saint Charity* was often used in this way.

Young men will do't, if they come to't;
By cock, they are to blame.[14]

Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promis'd me to wed.
So would I ha' done, by yonder Sun,
An thou hadst not come to my bed.]

King. How long hath she been thus?

Oph. I hope all will be well. We must be patient; but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the cold ground. My brother shall know of it; and so I thank you for your good counsel. — Come, my coach! — Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night. [*Exit.*

King. Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you. — [*Exit* HORATIO.

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalias![15] First, her father slain:
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove: the people mudded,
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,
In hugger-mugger to inter him:[16] poor Ophelia
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,
Without the which we're pictures, or mere beasts:
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France;
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death;
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,

[14] The origin and meaning of this oath, also, are wrapped in obscurity. It occurs in several old plays, and Shakespeare has it in at least two other places. The most likely account represents it to have been a humorous oath, the *Cock* and *Magpie* being a favourite alehouse sign. In *A Catechism* by George Giffard, 1583, we have, — "Because they will not take the name of God to abuse it, they swear by small things, as *by cock and pye*, by the mouse foot, and many such like."

[15] Men go out *singly*, or one by one, to act as spies; when they go forth to *fight*, they go in armies.

[16] This phrase was much used, before and in the Poet's time, for any thing done hurriedly and by stealth. Thus Florio explains *clandestinare*, "to hide or conceal by stealth, or *in hugger-mugger*." And in Wheeler's *Treatise of Commerce*, 1601: "The straggler shipping his cloth and other commodity in covert manner, *hugger-mugger*, and at obscure ports." And in North's *Plutarch* Antony urges that Cæsar's "body should be honourably buried, and not in *hugger-mugger*."

Like to a murdering-piece, in many places [17]
Gives me superfluous death. [*A Noise within.*
Queen. Alack, what noise is this?
King. Where are my Switzers? [18] Let them guard the door. —

Enter a Gentleman.

What is the matter?
Gent. Save yourself, my lord:
The ocean, overpeering of his list,[19]
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord;
And — as the world were now but to begin,[20]
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word —
They cry, *Choose we; Laertes shall be King!*
Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds,
Laertes shall be King, Laertes King!
Queen. How cheerfully on the false trail they cry! —
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs! [21]
King. The doors are broke. [*Noise within.*

Enter LAERTES, *armed; Danes following.*

Laer. Where is this King? — Sirs, stand you all without.
Danes. No, let's come in.
Laer. I pray you, give me leave.
Danes. We will, we will. [*They retire without the Door.*
Laer. I thank you: — keep the door. — O, thou vile King,
Give me my father!
Queen. Calmly, good Laertes.
Laer. That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,
[And] brands the harlot even here, between
The chaste unsmirched brows of my true mother.[22]

[17] A murdering-piece, or *murderer*, was a small piece of artillery. Case shot, filled with small bullets, nails, old iron, &c., was often used in these *murderers*. This accounts for the raking fire attributed to them in the text.

[18] *Switzers*, for royal guards. The Swiss were then, as since, mercenary soldiers of any nation that could afford to pay them.

[19] *Overflowing* his *bounds*, or *limits*. See page 211, note 12.

[20] *As* has here the force of *as if*. The explanation sometimes given of the passage is, that the rabble are the ratifiers and props of every *idle* word. The plain sense is, that antiquity and custom are the ratifiers and props of every *sound* word touching the matter in hand, the ordering of human society and the State.

[21] Hounds are said to run *counter* when they are upon a false scent, or hunt it by the heel, running backward and mistaking the course of the game.

[22] *Unsmirched* is *unsullied, spotless*.

King. What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like? —
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will.[23] — Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incens'd: — Let him go, Gertrude: —
Speak, man.

Laer. Where is my father?

King. Dead.

Queen. But not by him.

King. Let him demand his fill.

Laer. How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:
To Hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation. To this point I stand, —
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I'll be reveng'd
Most throughly for my father.

King. Who shall stay you?

Laer. My will, not all the world:
And for my means, I'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.

King. Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge,
That, swoopstake,[24] you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?

Laer. None but his enemies.

King. Will you know them, then?

Laer. To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms,
And, like the kind life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood.[25]

King. Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensibly in grief for it,

[23] "Proofs," says Coleridge, "as indeed all else is, that Shakespeare never intended us to see the King with Hamlet's eyes; though, I suspect, the managers have long done so."

[24] *Swoopstake*, commonly printed *sweepstake*, here means *indiscriminately*. A sweepstake is one who wins or *sweeps in all the stakes*, whether on the race-ground or at the gaming-table.

[25] The pelican is a fabulous bird, often referred to by the old poets for illustration. It was also much used as a significant ornament in Mediæval church architecture, the pelican being represented as an eagle. An old book entitled *A Choice of Emblems and other Devices*, by Geffrey Whitney, 1586, contains a picture of an eagle on her nest, tearing open her breast to feed her young.

It shall as level to your judgment pierce
As day does to your eye.[26]

Danes. [*Within.*] Let her come in.

Laer. How now! what noise is that? —

Re-enter OPHELIA.

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven-times salt,
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye! —
By Heaven, thy madness shall be paid with weight,
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia! —
O Heavens! is't possible, a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?
Nature is fine in love; and, where 'tis fine,
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

Oph. [Sings.] *They bore him barefac'd on the bier;*
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;
And in his grave rain'd many a tear, —

Fare you well, my dove!

Laer. Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
It could not move thus.

Oph. You must sing, *Down a-down, an you call him a-down-a.* O, how the wheel becomes it![27] It is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.[28]

Laer. This nothing's more than matter.

Oph. There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray you, love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for thoughts.[29]

[26] The folio has *pierce;* the quartos, *pear*, meaning *appear*. The latter is both awkward in language and tame in sense. Understanding *level* in the sense of *direct, pierce* gives an apt and clear meaning.

[27] The *wheel* is the *burden* of a ballad, from the Latin *rota*, a *round*, which is usually accompanied with a burden frequently repeated.

[28] Meaning, probably, some old ballad, of which no traces have survived.

[29] The language of flowers is very ancient, and the old poets have many instances of it. In *The Winter's Tale*, iv. 3, Perdita makes herself delectable in the use of it, distributing her flowers much as Ophelia does here. Rosemary, being supposed to strengthen the memory, was held emblematic of remembrance, and in that thought was distributed at weddings and funerals. — Pansies, from the French *pensées*, were emblems of pensiveness, *thought* being here again used for *grief*, the same as I have already shown in iii. 1, note 9. The next speech, "*thoughts* and remembrance fitted," is another instance of the same usage. — *Document*, from the Latin *doceo*, is here used in the original sense of *lesson*, or *something taught*. So in *The Faerie Queene*, Book i. x. 19, where Fidelia takes the Redcross Knight under her tuition,

> "That of her heavenly learning he might taste,
> And heare the wisedom of her wordes divine:"
> "And that her sacred Booke, with blood ywritt,

Laer. A document in madness; thoughts and remembrance fitted.

Oph. There's fennel for you, and columbines:[30] — there's rue for you; and here's some for me: we may call it herb-grace o' Sundays: — O, you must wear your rue with a difference.[31] — There's a daisy: — I would give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my father died.[32] — They say he made a good end, —

[Sings.] *For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy,* —

Laer. Thought and affliction,[33] passion, Hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

Oph. [Sings.] *And will he not come again?*
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead;
Go to thy death-bed;
He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll:
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan:
God ha' mercy on his soul![34]

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God b' wi' you! [*Exit.*

Laer. Do you see this, O God?

King. Laertes, I must cómmune with your grief,[35]
Or you deny me right. Go but apart;

> That none could reade except she did them teach,
> She unto him disclosed every whitt;
> And heavenly *documents* thereout did preach,
> That weaker wit of man could never reach;
> Of God, of Grace, of Justice, of Free-will;
> That wonder was to heare her goodly speech."

[30] Fennel and columbine were significant of cajolery and ingratitude; so that Ophelia might fitly give them to the guileful and faithless King.

[31] Rue was emblematic of sorrow or *ruth*, and was called *herb-grace* from the moral and medicinal virtues ascribed to it. — There may be some uncertainty as to Ophelia's meaning, when she says to the Queen, "you must wear your rue with a *difference*." *Bearing a difference* is an ol heraldic phrase; and the difference here intended is probably best explained in Cogan's *Haven of Health*: "The second property is that *rue abateth carnal lust*, which is also confirmed by Galen." So that the difference in the Queen's case would be emblematic of her "hasty return to the nuptial state, and a severe reflection on her indecent marriage."

[32] The daisy was an emblem of dissembling; the violet, of faithfulness, and is so set down in *The Lover's Nosegay*.

[33] *Thought* again for *grief, care, pensiveness*.

[34] Poor Ophelia in her madness remembers the ends of many old popular ballads. *Bonny Robin* appears to have been a favourite, for there were many others written to that tune.

[35] *Commune*, spelt *common* in the folio, has the first syllable long here. It was often used so by the old poets; Milton has it so, and even Wordsworth.

Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,
To you in satisfaction; but if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

Laer. Let this be so:
His means of death, his obscure burial,—
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite nor formal ostentation,—
Cry to be heard, as 'twere from Heaven to Earth,
That I must call't in question.[36]

King. So you shall;
And where th' offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you, go with me. [*Exeunt.*

Scene VI. *The Same. Another Room in the Same.*

Enter Horatio *and a Servant.*

Hor. What are they that would speak with me?

Serv. Sailors, sir: they say they have letters for you.

Hor. Let them come in.— [*Exit Servant.*
I do not know from what part of the world
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

Enter Sailors.

1 *Sail.* God bless you, sir.

Hor. Let Him bless thee too.

1 *Sail.* He shall, sir, an't please Him. There's a letter for you, sir,—it comes from th' ambassador that was bound for England,—if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

Hor. [Reads.] *Horatio, when thou shalt have overlook'd this, give these fellows some means to the King: they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour; and in the grapple I boarded them: on the instant, they got clear of our ship; so*

[36] The funerals of knights and persons of rank were made with great ceremony and ostentation formerly. Sir John Hawkins observes that "the sword, the helmet, the gauntlet, spurs, and tabard are still hung over the grave of every knight."

I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the King have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me with as much haste as thou would'st fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter.[87] *These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell:*

He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET.

Come, I will give you way for these your letters;
And do't the speedier, that you may direct me
To him from whom you brought them. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII. *The Same. Another Room in the Same.*

Enter the KING *and* LAERTES.

King. Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend;
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursu'd my life.

Laer. It well appears: But tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, greatness, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirr'd up.

King. O, for two special reasons;
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd,
But yet to me they're strong. The Queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself,
(My virtue or my plague, be't either which,)
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him;[1]
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves to graces: so that my arrows,
Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,[2]
Would have reverted to my bow again,
And not where I had aim'd them.

[87] The *bore* is the *caliber* of a gun.

[1] *The general gender* is the common *sort* of people. The Poet has the like phrase, "one *gender* of herbs."

[2] *Lighte shaftes* cannot stand in a *rough wind.* — ASCHAM.

Laer. And so have I a noble father lost;
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,[8]
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections. But my revenge will come.

King. Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull,
That we can let our beard be shook with danger,
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more:
I lov'd your father, and we love ourself;
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine —

Enter a Messenger.

How now! what news?

Mess. Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:
This to your Majesty; this to the Queen.

King. From Hamlet! who brought them?

Mess. Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not:
They were given me by Claudio; he receiv'd them
Of him that brought them.

King. Laertes, you shall hear them. —
Leave us. [*Exit Messenger.*

[Reads.] *High and mighty: You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes; when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount th' occasions of my sudden and more strange return.*
HAMLET.

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

Laer. Know you the hand?

King. 'Tis Hamlet's character. *Naked* —
And in a postscript here he says, *alone:*
Can you advise me?

Laer. I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
Thus diddest thou.

King. If it be so, Laertes, —
As how should it be so, how otherwise? —
Will you be rul'd by me?

Laer. Ay, my lord;
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

King. To thine own peace. If he be now return'd, —

[8] If I may return or go back to her as a theme of praise.

As checking at his voyage,[4] and that he means
No more to undertake it, — I will work him
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but fall:
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe;
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice,[5]
And call it accident.

Laer. My lord, I will be rul'd;
The rather, if you could devise it so,
That I might be the organ.

King. It falls right.
You have been talk'd of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein they say you shine: your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him
As did that one; and that, in my regard,
Of the unworthiest siege.[6]

Laer. What part is that, my lord?

King. A very riband in the cap of youth,[7]
Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes
The light and careless livery that it wears
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
Importing health and graveness. Two months since,
Here was a gentleman of Normandy, —
I've seen, myself, and serv'd against the French,
And they can well on horseback: [8] but this gallant
Had witchcraft in't; he grew unto his seat;
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,
As he had been incorps'd and demi-natur'd
With the brave beast: so far he topp'd my thought,
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,[9]
Come short of what he did.

Laer. A Norman was't?

King. A Norman.

Laer. Upon my life, Lamond.

King. The very same.

Laer. I know him well: he is the brooch, indeed,
And gem of all the nation.

[4] To *check at* is a term in falconry, meaning to start away or fly off from the lure. See page 207, note 14, and page 211, note 10.

[5] *Acquit* the proceeding of all *design*.

[6] The Poet again uses *siege* for *seat*, that is, *place or rank*, in *Othello*, i. 2: "I fetch my life and being from men of royal *siege*." The usage was not uncommon.

[7] The Poet repeatedly has *very* in the sense of *mere*.

[8] *Can* is here used in its original sense of *ability* or *skill*.

[9] That is, in *the imagination* of shapes and tricks, or *feats*. This use of *forge* and *forgery* was not unfrequent. — To *top* is to *surpass*.

King. He made confession of you;
And gave you such a masterly report
For art and exercise in your defence,[10]
And for your rapier most especially,
That he cried out, 'twould be a sight indeed,
If one could match you: the scrimers of their nation,[11]
He swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye,
If you oppos'd them. Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy,
That he could nothing do but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with you.
Now, out of this,—

Laer. What out of this, my lord?

King. Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

Laer. Why ask you this?

King. Not that I think you did not love your father,
But that I know love is begun by time;[12]
And that I see, in passages of proof,[13]
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.
There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;
And nothing is at a like goodness still;
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,[14]
Dies in his own too-much. That we would do,
We should do when we would; for this *would* changes,
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;
And then this *should* is like a spendthrift sigh,
That hurts by easing.[15] But, to th' quick o' the ulcer:
Hamlet comes back: What would you undertake,

[10] *Defence* here means *fencing*, or *sword-practice*.

[11] *Scrimer* is from the French *escrimeur*, which means fencer.

[12] As love is begun by *time*, and has its gradual increase, so *time* qualifies and abates it.

[13] *Passages of proof* means *instances of trial*, or *experience*.

[14] *Plurisy* is from the Latin *plus*, *pluris*, and must not be confounded with *pleurisy*. It means *excess*, much the same as Burns's "*unco* guid." So, in Massinger's *Unnatural Combat*: "*Plurisy* of goodness is thy ill."

[15] It was anciently believed that sighing consumed the blood. The Poet has several allusions to this; as in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, iii. 2: "Sighs of love that cost the fresh blood dear." There is also a fine moral meaning in the figure. Jeremy Taylor speaks of certain people who take to a sentimental penitence, as "cozening themselves with their own tears," as if these would absolve them from "doing works meet for repentance." Such tears may be fitly said to "hurt by easing," because they set the mind at rest, and yet are but tokens of a repentance that needs itself to be repented of.

To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words?
Laer. To cut his throat i' the church.
King. No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;[16]
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.
Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you; bring you, in fine, together,
And wager o'er your heads: he, being remiss,
Most generous, and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils; so that, with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated,[17] and in a pass of practice
Requite him for your father.
Laer. I will do't;
And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank,
So mortal, that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the Moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratch'd withal: I'll touch my point
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.
King. Let's further think of this;
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape. If this should fail,
And that our drift look through our bad performance,[18]
Twere better not assay'd: therefore this project
Should have a back or second, that might hold,
If this should blast in proof.[19] Soft!—let me see:—
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings,—
I ha't:

[16] Murder should not have the protection or privilege of sanctuary in any place. The allusion is to the rights of sanctuary with which certain religious places were formerly invested, so that criminals resorting to them were shielded not only from private revenge, but from the arm of the law. The King means that no such refuge ought to protect the murderer of Polonius against the avenging arm of his son.

[17] *Unbated* is *unblunted:* a foil without the cap, or button, which was put upon the point, when fencers were to play or practise their art. — *A pass of practice* is a *thrust* made as in exercise of skill, and without any purpose of harm; the thruster pretending to be ignorant of the button's being off the foil.

[18] If our purpose should expose or betray itself through lack of skill in the execution.

[19] Should break down in the trial. The image is of proving guns, which of course sometimes burst in the testing.

When in your motion you are hot and dry,
(As make your bouts more violent to that end,)
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepar'd him
A chalice for the nonce; whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,[20]
Our purpose may hold there. —

Enter the QUEEN.

How now, sweet Queen!

Queen. One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow. — Your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

Laer. Drown'd! O, where?[21]

Queen. There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream:
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,[22]
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,[23]
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indu'd
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.[24]

Laer. Alas, then she is drown'd?

Queen. Drown'd, drown'd.

[20] A *stuck* is a *thrust*. Stoccata, Italian. Sometimes called a *staccado* in English.

[21] That Laertes might be excused in some degree for not cooling, the Act concludes with the affecting death of Ophelia; who in the beginning lay like a little projection of land into a lake or stream, covered with spray-flowers, quietly reflected in the quiet waters; but at length is undermined or loosened, and becomes a fairy isle, and after a brief vagrancy sinks almost without an eddy. — COLERIDGE.

[22] *Liberal* is repeatedly used by Shakespeare in the sense of *loose-tongued*.

[23] So the folio; instead of *tunes*, the quartos have *lauds*; which might well be preferred, as agreeing better with *chanted*, and as conveying a touch of pathos which *tunes* does not quite reach. The weight, however, of editorial judgment is in favour of *tunes*. — *Incapable* is evidently used in the sense of *unconscious*.

[24] Here, again, *wretch* is used as a strong expression of tenderness. See page 554, note 17. This passage is deservedly celebrated, and aptly illustrates the Poet's power of making the description of a thing better than the thing itself, by giving us his eyes to see it with.

Laer. Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet
It is our trick; Nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will: when these are gone,
The woman will be out. — Adieu, my lord:
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,
But that this folly drowns it.[25] [*Exit.*

King. Let's follow, Gertrude:
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again;
Therefore let's follow. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V. SCENE I. *Elsinore. A Church-Yard.*

Enter two Clowns, with Spades, &c.

1 *Clo.* Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

2 *Clo.* I tell thee she is; and therefore make her grave straight:[1] the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

1 *Clo.* How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

2 *Clo.* Why, 'tis found so.

1 *Clo.* It must be *se offendendo;*[2] it cannot be else. For here lies the point: If I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act; and an act hath three branches; it is to act, to do, and to perform: argal she drown'd herself wittingly.[3]

2 *Clo.* Nay, but hear you, goodman delver,—

1 *Clo.* Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes; mark you that: but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself:

[25] So the quartos; the folio has *douts* instead of *drowns*. *Dout* was sometimes used for *do out, destroy.*

[1] *Straight* for *straightway;* a common usage.

[2] The Clown, in undertaking to show off his legal learning, blunders *offendendo* for *defendendo.*

[3] Shakespeare's frequent and correct use of legal terms and phrases has led to the belief that he must have served something of an apprenticeship in the law. Among the legal authorities studied in his time were Plowden's *Commentaries*, a black-letter book, written in the old law French. One of the cases reported by Plowden is that of Dame Hales, regarding the forfeiture of a lease, in consequence of the suicide of Sir James Hales; and Sir John Hawkins has pointed out, that this burlesque of "crowner's-quest law" was probably intended as a ridicule on certain passages in that case.

argal he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

2 *Clo.* But is this law?

1 *Clo.* Ay, marry, is't; crowner's-quest law.

2 *Clo.* Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of Christian burial.

1 *Clo.* Why, there thou say'st; and the more pity, that great folks shall have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even-Christian.[4] — Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers; they hold up Adam's profession.

2 *Clo.* Was he a gentleman?

1 *Clo.* He was the first that ever bore arms.

2 *Clo.* Why, he had none.

1 *Clo.* What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digg'd: could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee: if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself —

2 *Clo.* Go to.

1 *Clo.* What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

2 *Clo.* The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

1 *Clo.* I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well: But how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now, thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal the gallows may do well to thee. To't again; come.

2 *Clo.* Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?

1 *Clo.* Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.[5]

2 *Clo.* Marry, now I can tell.

1 *Clo.* To't.

2 *Clo.* Mass, I cannot tell.

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO, *at a distance.*

1 *Clo.* Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and when you are ask'd this question next, say *a grave-maker:* the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of liquor. [*Exit* 2 *Clown.*

[4] *Even-Christian* for *fellow-Christian* was the old mode of expression; and is to be found in *Chaucer* and the *Chroniclers*. Wicliffe has *even-servant* for *fellow-servant*.

[5] This was a common phrase for giving over or ceasing to do a thing, a metaphor derived from the *unyoking* of oxen at the end of their labour.

1 Clown digs and sings.

In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, O, *the time, for,* ah, *my behove,*
O, *methought there was nothing meet.*[6]

Ham. Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

Hor. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Ham. 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

1 *Clo.* [Sings.] *But age, with his stealing steps,*
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,
And hath shipp'd me intil the land,
As if I had never been such.
[Throws up a Skull.

Ham. That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'erreaches; one that would circumvent God, might it not?

Hor. It might, my lord.

Ham. Or of a courtier, which could say *Good-morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord?* This might be my Lord Such-a-one, that prais'd my Lord Such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it; might it not?

Hor. Ay, my lord.

Ham. Why, e'en so; and now my Lady Worm's;[7] chapless, and knock'd about the mazzard with a sexton's spade: Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with em?[8] mine ache to think on't.

1 *Clo.* [Sings.] *A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,*
For and a shrouding sheet:[9]

[6] The original ballad from whence these stanzas are taken is printed in Tottel's *Miscellany, or Songes and Sonnettes by Lord Surrey and others*, 1575. The ballad is attributed to Lord Vaux, and is printed by Dr. Percy in his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*. The *ohs* and the *ahs* are meant to express the Clown's gruntings as he digs.

[7] The skull that was *my Lord Such-a-one's* is now *my Lady Worm's.*

[8] *Loggats* are small logs or pieces of wood. Hence *loggats* was the name of an ancient rustic game, wherein a stake was fixed in the ground at which *loggats* were thrown; in short, a ruder kind of quoit play.

[9] "*For and,*" says Mr. Dyce, "in the present version of the stanza, answers to *And eke* in that given by Percy." So, in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle:* "Your squire doth come, and with him comes the lady, *for and* the Squire of Damsels, as I take it." And in Middleton's *Fair Quarrel*: "A hippocrene, a tweak, *for and* a fucus."

O, *a pit of clay for to be made*
For such a guest is meet.

[Throws up another Skull.

Ham. There's another: why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddits now, his quillets,[10] his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel,[11] and will not tell him of his action of battery? Humph! This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries:[12] Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

Hor. Not a jot more, my lord.

Ham. Is not parchment made of sheep-skins?

Hor. Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

Ham. They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that.[13] I will speak to this fellow.—Whose grave's this, sir?

1 *Clo.* Mine, sir.—

[Sings.] O, *a pit of clay for to be made*
For such a guest is meet.

Ham. I think it be thine indeed; for thou liest in't.

1 *Clo.* You lie out on't, sir, and therefore it is not yours: for my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.

Ham. Thou dost lie in't, to be in't, and say it is thine: 'tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

1 *Clo.* 'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away again, from me to you.

Ham. What man dost thou dig it for?

[10] *Quiddits* are quirks, or subtle questions; and *quillets* are nice and frivolous distinctions. The etymology of this last word has plagued many learned heads. Blount, in his *Glossography*, clearly points out *quodlibet* as the origin of it. Bishop Wilkins calls a *quillet* "a frivolousness."

[11] *Sconce* was not unfrequently used for *head*.

[12] Shakespeare here is profuse of his legal learning. Ritson, a lawyer, shall interpret for him: "A recovery with *double voucher* is so called from *two* persons being successively *voucher*, or called upon to warrant the tenant's title. Both *fines* and *recoveries* are fictions of law, used to convert an estate tail into a fee-simple. Statutes are (not acts of parliament but) statutes *merchant* and staple, particular modes of *recognizance* or acknowledgment for securing *debts*, which thereby become a charge upon the party's land. *Statutes* and *recognizances* are constantly mentioned together in the convenants of a purchase deed."

[13] A quibble is here implied upon *parchment*; deeds, which were always written on parchment, being in legal language "common assurances"

1 *Clo.* For no man, sir.

Ham. What woman, then?

1 *Clo.* For none, neither.

Ham. Who is to be buried in't?

1 *Clo.* One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she is dead.

Ham. How absolute the knave is! we must speak by the card,[14] or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked,[15] that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe.[16] — How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

1 *Clo.* Of all the days i' the year, I came to't that day that our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

Ham. How long is that since?

1 *Clo.* Cannot you tell that? every fool can tell that: it was the very day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad, and sent into England.

Ham. Ay, marry; why was he sent into England?

1 *Clo.* Why, because he was mad: he shall recover his wits there; or, if he do not, 'tis no great matter there.

Ham. Why?

1 *Clo.* 'Twill not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

Ham. How came he mad?

1 *Clo.* Very strangely, they say.

Ham. How strangely?

1 *Clo.* 'Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

Ham. Upon what ground?

1 *Clo.* Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

Ham. How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

1 *Clo.* 'Faith, if he be not rotten before he die, he will last you some eight year, or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year.

Ham. Why he more than another?

1 *Clo.* Why, sir, his hide is so tann'd with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your dead body. Here's a skull now; this skull hath lain you i' the earth three-and-twenty years.

Ham. Whose was it?

1 *Clo.* A mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

Ham. Nay, I know not.

[14] To speak by the card, is to speak precisely, by rule, or according to a prescribed course. It is a metaphor from the seaman's *card*, or chart, by which he guides his course.

[15] *Picked* is *curious, over-nice.*

[16] *Kibe* is an old word for *chilblain.* The Poet has it several times.

1 *Clo.* A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'a pour'd a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

Ham. This?

1 *Clo.* E'en that.

Ham. Let me see. [*Taking the Skull.*] — Alas, poor Yorick! — I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd I know not how oft. — Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that! — Pr'ythee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Hor. What's that, my lord?

Ham. Dost thou think Alexander look'd o' this fashion i' the earth?

Hor. E'en so.

Ham. And smelt so? pah! [*Puts down the Skull.*

Hor. E'en so, my lord.

Ham. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

Hor. 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Ham. No, 'faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam: and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?

> Imperial Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
> O, that that earth which kept the world in awe
> Should patch a wall t' expel the Winter's flaw![17] —

But soft! but soft! aside: — here comes the King,

Enter Priests, &c., in Procession; the Corpse of OPHELIA, LAERTES *and Mourners following; the* KING, *the* QUEEN *their Trains, &c.*

The Queen, the courtiers. Who is that they follow,
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken,

[17] A *flaw* is a violent gust of wind.

The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life. 'Twas of some estate.[18]
Couch we awhile, and mark. [*Retiring with* HORATIO.
Laer. What ceremony else?
Ham. That is Laertes, a very noble youth: mark.
Laer. What ceremony else?
1 *Priest.* Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd
As we have warrantize: her death was doubtful;
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified have lodg'd
Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
Shards,[19] flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her:
Yet here she is allow'd her virgin rites,[20]
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.[21]
Laer. Must there no more be done?
1 *Priest.* No more be done:
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a *requiem*,[22] and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.
Laer. Lay her i' the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! — I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.
Ham. What, the fair Ophelia!
Queen. Sweets to the sweet: farewell! [*Scattering Flowers.*
I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
And not have strew'd thy grave.
Laer. O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Depriv'd thee of! — Hold off the earth awhile,

[18] To *fordo* is to *undo*, to *destroy*. *Estate* was a common term for *persons of rank*.

[19] *Shards* not only means fragments of pots and tiles, but rubbish of any kind. Our version of the Bible has preserved to us *pot-sherds*; and bricklayers, in Surrey and Sussex, use the compounds *tile-sherds*, *slate-sherds*. *For*, in the preceding line, has the force of *instead of*.

[20] Instead of *rites*, the folio reading, the quartos have *crants*, said to be an old provincial word for *wreaths* or *garlands*. *Rites* has the disadvantage of being the more general term; but then the sense of *crants* is probably implied in *strewments*.

[21] *Of* has here the force of *with*.

[22] A *requiem* is a mass sung for the rest of the soul. So called from the words, *Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine*.

Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.
[*Leaps into the Grave.*
Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made
T' o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.
Ham. [*Advancing.*] What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? this is I,
Hamlet the Dane. [*Leaps into the Grave*
Laer. The Devil take thy soul!
[*Grappling with him.*
Ham. Thou pray'st not well.
I pr'ythee, take thy fingers from my throat;
For, though I am not splenetive and rash,
Yet have I something in me dangerous,
Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand!
King. Pluck them asunder.
Queen. Hamlet, Hamlet!
All. Gentlemen,—
Hor. Good my lord, be quiet.
[*The Attendants part them, and they come out of the Grave.*
Ham. Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.
Queen. O my son, what theme?
Ham. I lov'd Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. — What wilt thou do for her?
King. O, he is mad, Laertes.
Queen. For love of God, forbear him.
Ham. 'Zounds, show me what thou'lt do:
Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?
Woo't drink up Esill,[23] eat a crocodile?
I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?

[23] So this name is spelt in the quartos, all but that of 1603, which has *vessels*. The folio spells it *Esile*. What particular lake, river, firth, or gulf was meant by the Poet, is something uncertain. The more common opinion is, that he had in mind the river *Yesel*, which, of the larger branches of the Rhine, is the one nearest to Denmark. In the maps of our time, *Isef* is the name of a gulf almost surrounded by land, in the Island of Zealand, not many miles west of Elsinore. Either of these names might naturally enough have been spelt and pronounced *Esill* or *Isell* by an Englishman in Shakespeare's time. As for the notion held by some, that the Poet meant *eysell* or *eisel*, an old word for *vinegar*, it seems pretty thoroughly absurd. In strains of hyperbole, such figures of speech were often used by the old poets. *Woo't* is a contraction of *wouldst thou*, said to be common in the northern counties of England.

To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I:
And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us; till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou.

Queen. This is mere madness:
And thus awhile the fit will work on him;
Anon, as patient as the female dove
When that her golden couplets are disclos'd,
His silence will sit drooping.[24]

Ham. Hear you, sir:
What is the reason that you use me thus?
I lov'd you ever: But it is no matter;
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day. [*Exit.*

King. I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him.—
[*Exit* HORATIO.
[*To* LAERTES.] Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;
We'll put the matter to the present push.—
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.—
This grave shall have a living monument:
An hour of quiet shortly we shall see;
Till then, in patience our proceeding be. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *The Same. A Hall in the Castle.*

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO.

Ham. So much for this, sir: now shall you see the other
You do remember all the circumstance?[1]

Hor. Remember it, my lord!

Ham. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep:[2] methought I lay

[24] The folio gives this speech to the King, in whose mouth it is about as proper as a diamond in a swine's snout. — The *golden couplets* are the two chicks of the dove; which, when first hatched, are covered with a *yellow* down; and in her patient tenderness the mother rarely leaves the nest, till her little ones attain to some degree of dove-discretion. — *Disclose* was often used for *hatch*.

[1] *Circumstance* probably means the *circumstantial account* given by Hamlet in his letter to Horatio. — *The other* refers, no doubt, to the further matter intimated in that letter: "I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb."

[2] Hamlet has from the first divined the King's purpose in sending him to England. Since the close of the Play, when the King was "frighted with

Worse than the mutines in the bilboes.[3] Rashly, —
And prais'd be rashness for it; let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do fail;[4] and that should teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will, —
Hor. That is most certain.
Ham. — Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf'd about me,[5] in the dark
Grop'd I to find out them; had my desire;
Finger'd their packet; and, in fine, withdrew
To mine own room again: making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio, —
O royal knavery! — an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reasons, —
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,
With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,[6] —
That on the supervise, no leisure bated,[7]
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.
Hor. Is't possible?
Ham. Here's the commission: read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

false fire," Hamlet *knows* that the King did indeed murder his father, and he also knows that the King *suspects* him of knowing it. Hence, on shipboard, he naturally has a vague, general apprehension of mischief, and this as naturally fills him with nervous curiosity as to the particular shape of danger which he is to encounter.

[3] The *bilboes* were bars of iron with fetters annexed to them, by which mutinous or disorderly sailors were linked together. The word is derived from *Bilboa*, in Spain, where the things were made. To understand the allusion, it should be known that, as these fetters connected the legs of the offenders very closely together, their attempts to rest must be as fruitless as those of Hamlet, in whose mind *there was a kind of fighting that would not let him sleep.* — *Mutines* is for *mutineers.*

[4] The quarto of 1604 has *pall* instead of *fail*; the later quartos, *fall*; the folio, *paule*. *Fail* is Mr. Dyce's reading. Still I am not sure but *pall* may be right; as from the old French *palser*, to *fade* or *fall away*. So, in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "I'll never follow thy *pall'd* fortunes more." — Note that all after *rashly*, down to the beginning of Hamlet's next speech is parenthetical. The passage well illustrates his irrepressible reflectiveness; or how particular events start him off on general observations.

[5] *Thrown*, or *gathered*, *loosely* about me.

[6] Such *bugbears* and *fantastic dangers growing out of* my life. The Poet has *bug* several times in that sense. Thus, in *The Winter's Tale*, iii. 2: "Sir, spare your threats: the *bug*, which you would fright me with, I seek." — *Goblins* were a knavish sort of fairies, perhaps *ignes fatui*, and so belonged to the genus Humbug.

[7] The language is obscure, though the general sense is plain enough. I suspect *bated* is an instance of the passive form with the active sense; no leisure *abating* the speed; or the haste not being lessened by any pause. — *Supervise* is *looking over*, *perusal.*

Hor. I beseech you.

Ham. Being thus benetted round with villanies, —
Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play,[8] — I sat me down;
Devis'd a new commission; wrote it fair.
I once did hold it, as our statists do,[9]
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou know
Th' effect of what I wrote?

Hor. Ay, good my lord.

Ham. An earnest conjuration from the King, —
As England was his faithful tributary;
As love between them like the palm might flourish;
As Peace should still her wheaten garland wear,
And stand a cement 'tween their amities;[10]
And many such-like *ases* of great charge, —
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,
Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allow'd.

Hor. How was this seal'd?

Ham. Why, even in that was Heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal;
Folded the writ up in form of th' other;
Subscrib'd it; gave't th' impression; plac'd it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.

Hor. So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

Ham. Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
They are not near my conscience; their defeat

[8] A figure borrowed from the stage. Hamlet means that his thoughts were so fiery-footed as to start off in the play itself before he could get through with the introduction to it.

[9] *Statist* is the old word for *statesman*. Blackstone says, that "most of our great men of Shakespeare's time wrote very bad hands; their secretaries, very neat ones." This must be taken with some qualification; for Elizabeth's two most powerful ministers, Leicester and Burghley, both wrote good hands. It is certain that there were some who did write most wretched scrawls, but probably not from affectation; though it was accounted a mechanical and vulgar accomplishment to write a fair hand.

[10] Instead of *cement*, all the old copies have *comma*, out of which it is hardly possible to extract any sense. Hanmer made the change, and it is clearly right. So in *Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 2, Cæsar speaks to Antony of Octavia as "the piece of virtue which is set betwixt us as the *cement* of our love, to keep it builded." — It has been noted before, that *as* and *that* were used indifferently in the Poet's time. — "*Great charge*" is great *importance; charges* with great *import*.

Does by their own insinuation grow.
'Tis dangerous, when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell-incensed points
Of mighty opposites.[11]

Hor. Why, what a king is this!

Ham. Does it not, think'st thee, stand me now upon?
He that hath kill'd my King, and [stain'd] my mother;
Popp'd in between th' election and my hopes;
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage; is't not perfect conscience
To quit him with this arm? and is't not to be damn'd
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?[12]

Hor. It must be shortly known to him from England
What is the issue of the business there.

Ham. It will be short: the interim is mine;
And a man's life no more than to say *one.*
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For by the image of my cause I see
The portraiture of his.[13] I'll court his favours:[14]
But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a towering passion.

Hor. Peace! who comes here?

Enter OSRIC.

Osr. Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

Ham. I humbly thank you, sir. — [*Aside to* HORATIO.] Dost know this water-fly?[15]

Hor. [*Aside to* HAM.] No, my good lord.

Ham. [*Aside to* HOR.] Thy state is the more gracious; for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile: let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the King's mess: 'tis a chough; but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.

[11] When men of lower rank come between the thrusts and sword-points of great men engaged in fierce and mortal duel, or bent on fighting it out to the death.

[12] Is it not a damnable sin to let this *cancer* of humanity proceed further in mischief and villainy? *Canker*, in one of its senses, means an eating, malignant sore, like a *cancer;* which word is from the same original.

[13] Hamlet and Laertes have lost each his father, and both have perhaps lost equally in Ophelia; so that their cause of sorrow is much the same.

[14] Hamlet means "I'll solicit his *good will;*" the general meaning of *favours* in the Poet's time.

[15] In *Troilus and Cressida*, v. 1, Thersites says of Patroclus: "How the poor world is pestered with such *water-flies;* diminutives of nature." The gnats and such like insects are not inapt emblems of such busy triflers as Osric.

Osr. Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his Majesty.

Ham. I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his right use; 'tis for the head.

Osr. I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

Ham. No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly

Osr. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

Ham. But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

Osr. Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, — as 'twere, — I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you, that he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter, —

Ham. I beseech you, remember —

[*Moving him to put on his Hat*

Osr. Nay, in good faith; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to Court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences,[16] of very soft society and great showing: indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry; for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

Ham. Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you; though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory; and it but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail.[17] But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article; and his infusion of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror; and who else would trace him, his umbrage, noth ing more.[18]

Osr. Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

Ham. The concernancy, sir? why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

[16] In the conceited phrase-making of this lordly dandiprat, *excellent differences* probably means *distinctive excellences*.

[17] Thus the quarto of 1604; the others have *raw* instead of *yaw*. The words *quick sail* show that *yaw* is right. This word occurs as a substantive in Massinger's *Very Woman:* "O, the *yaws* that she will make! Look to your stern, dear mistress, and steer right." Where Gifford notes, — "A *yaw* is that unsteady motion which a ship makes in a great swell, when, in steering, she inclines to the right or left of her course." Scott also has the word in *The Antiquary:* "Thus escorted, the Antiquary moved along full of his learning, like a lordly man-of-war, and every now and then *yawing* to starboard and larboard to discharge a broadside upon his followers." — The old copies have *yet* instead of *it;* which, says Mr. Dyce, "was often mistaken by our early printers for *yet*, perhaps because it was written *yt*. — Hamlet is purposely obscure, in order to bewilder the poor fop.

[18] Hamlet is talking just like Osric, only more so. To *trace* is to *track*, or *keep pace* with. *Umbrage*, from the Latin *umbra*, is *shadow*. So that the meaning here is, The only resemblance to him is in his mirror; and noth ing but his shadow can keep up with him

Osr. Sir?

Hor. Is't not possible to understand in another tongue?[19] You will do't, sir, really.

Ham. What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

Osr. Of Laertes?

Hor. [*Aside to* HAM.] His purse is empty already; all his golden words are spent.

Ham. Of him, sir.

Osr. I know, you are not ignorant—

Ham. I would you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me.—Well, sir.

Osr. You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

Ham. I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; for, to know a man well, were to know himself.[20]

Osr. I mean, sir, for his weapon; but, in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he's unfellow'd.[21]

Ham. What's his weapon?

Osr. Rapier and dagger.

Ham. That's two of his weapons: but, well.

Osr. The King, sir, hath wag'd with him six Barbary horses; against the which he has impon'd,[22] as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so. Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

Ham. What call you the carriages?

Hor. [*Aside to* HAM.] I knew you must be edified by the margent ere you had done.[23]

Osr. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

Ham. The phrase would be more german to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides; I would it might be hangers till then. But, on: Six Barbary horses against six

[19] Horatio means to imply, that what with Osric's euphuism, and what with Hamlet's catching of Osric's style, they are not speaking in a tongue that can be understood; and he hints that they try *another* tongue, that is, the common one.

[20] The meaning is, that he will not claim to appreciate the excellence of Laertes, as this would imply equal excellence in himself; on the principle that a man cannot understand that which exceeds his own measure. Ham let goes into these subtilties on purpose to maze Osric.

[21] *Meed* was sometimes used in the sense of *merit*.

[22] The quartos have *inpawn'd*. *Impon'd* is probably meant as an Osrickian form of the same word. To *impawn* is to *put in pledge*, that is, to *wager*

[23] I knew you *would have to be* instructed by a *marginal commentary* The allusion is to the printing of comments in the margin of books. So, in *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 3:

> "And what obscur'd in this fair volume lies,
> Find written in the margent of his eyes."

French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages; that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this *impon'd*, as you call it?

Osr. The King, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him he shall not exceed you three hits: he hath laid, on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

Ham. How, if I answer no?

Osr. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

Ham. Sir, I will walk here in the hall: if it please his Majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me;[24] let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him, if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

Osr. Shall I re-deliver you e'en so?

Ham. To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

Osr. I commend my duty to your lordship.

Ham. Yours, yours. [*Exit* OSRIC.] — He does well to commend it himself; there are no tongues else for's turn.

Hor. This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.[25]

Ham. He did comply with his dug,[26] before he suck'd it. Thus has he (and many more of the same bevy,[27] that, I know, the drossy age dotes on) only got the tune of the time, and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions;[28] and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.

Enter a Lord.

Lord. My lord, his Majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him that you attend him in

[24] "The *breathing* time" is the time for exercise. See page 33, note 17.

[25] Meaning that Osric is a raw, unfledged, foolish fellow. It was a common comparison for a forward fool. Thus in Meres's *Wits Treasury*, 1598: "As the lapwing runneth away with the shell on her head, as soon as she is hatched."

[26] *Comply* is used in the same sense here as in ii. 2, note 41. In Fulwel's *Art of Flatterie*, 1579, the same idea occurs: "The very sucking babes hath a kind of adulation towards their nurses for the dug."

[27] Thus the folio; the quartos have *breed* instead of *bevy*.

[28] The quarto of 1604 has "most *prophane* and *trennowed* opinions;" in the other quartos *trennowed* is changed to *trennowned:* the folio reads as in the text. It may seem strange that this reading should have been thought unsatisfactory, but such is the case: Warburton changed *fond* to *fann'd*, and has been followed by divers editors. "Fond and winnowed opinions" are opinions conceitedly fine and winnowed clean of the dust of common sense; such opinions as are affected by the lingual exquisites of all times.

the hall: he sends to know, if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

Ham. I am constant to my purposes; they follow the King's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

Lord. The King and Queen and all are coming down.

Ham. In happy time.

Lord. The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

Ham. She well instructs me. [*Exit Lord.*

Hor. You will lose this wager, my lord.

Ham. I do not think so: since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldest not think how ill all's here about my heart; but it is no matter.

Hor. Nay, good my lord,—

Ham. It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman.[29]

Hor. If your mind dislike any thing, obey it: I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

Ham. Not a whit, we defy augury: there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is't to leave betimes?[30] Let be.

Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, LAERTES, *Lords*, OSRIC, *and Attendants, with Foils, &c.*

King. Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.
[*He puts the hand of* LAERTES *into that of* HAMLET.

Ham. Give me your pardon, sir: I've done you wrong;
But pardon't, as you are a gentleman.
This presence knows,
And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd
With sore distraction. What I have done,
That might your nature, honour, and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never, Hamlet:
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

[29] *Gain-giving* is *misgiving* or *giving-against*; here meaning a dim prognostic or presentiment of evil.

[30] This is the reading of the quartos: the folio reads, "Since no man *has* aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?" Johnson thus interprets the passage: "Since *no man knows aught* of the state which *he leaves*, since he cannot judge what other years may produce; why should we be afraid of *leaving* life betimes?"

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in this audience,
Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot my arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother.

Laer. I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge: but in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconcilement,
Till by some elder masters, of known honour,
I have a voice and precedent of peace,
To keep my name ungor'd. But till that time
I do receive your offer'd love like love,
And will not wrong it.

Ham. I embrace it freely;
And will this brother's wager frankly play. —
Give us the foils: — Come on.

Laer. Come, one for me.

Ham. I'll be your foil, Laertes: in mine ignorance
Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.

Laer. You mock me, sir.

Ham. No, by this hand.

King. Give them the foils, young Osric. — Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

Ham. Very well, my lord;
Your Grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.[31]

King. I do not fear it: I have seen you both;
But since he's better'd, we have therefore odds.

Laer. This is too heavy; let me see another.

Ham. This likes me well. These foils have all a length?
[*They prepare to play.*

Osr. Ay, my good lord.

King. Set me the stoups of wine upon that table. —
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire:

[31] The King had wagered *six Barbary horses* to a few *rapiers, poniards*, &c.; that is, about *twenty* to one. These are the *odds* here meant. The odds the King means in the next speech were *twelve* to *nine* in favour of Hamlet, by Laertes giving him three.

The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an union shall he throw,[32]
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,
Now the King drinks to Hamlet. — Come, begin; —
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

Ham. Come on, sir.

Laer. Come, my lord. [*They play.*

Ham. One.

Laer. No.

Ham. Judgment.

Osr. A hit, a very palpable hit.

Laer. Well; — again.

King. Stay; give me drink. — Hamlet, this pearl is thine;
Here's to thy health. — Give him the cup.

[*Trumpets sound, and Cannons shot off within.*

Ham. I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile. —
Come. — [*They play.*] Another hit; what say you?

Laer. A touch, a touch, I do confess.

King. Our son shall win.

Queen. He's fat, and scant of breath.[33] —
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows:
The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

Ham. Good Madam!

King. Gertrude, do not drink.

Queen. I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

King. [*Aside.*] It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.

Ham. I dare not drink yet, Madam;[34] by-and-by.

Queen. Come, let me wipe thy face.

[32] The folio has *union*; the quartos, *unice* and *onix*. *Union* is a name for large and precious pearls. Afterwards, on finding out what the King's *union* was, Hamlet tauntingly asks, "Is thy *union* here?" According to Rondeletus, pearls were thought to have an exhilarating quality. To swallow them in a draught, was esteemed a high strain of magnificence.

[33] This speaking of Hamlet as "*fat*, and scant of breath," is greatly at odds with the idea we are apt to form of him; though there is no good reason why the being somewhat fat should in any point take off from his excellence as a man or a prince. It is thought by some, however, and seems indeed likely enough to have been true, that the expression was used with special reference to Burbage, the original actor of Hamlet's part. Burbage died in 1619; and in a manuscript elegy upon his death are the following lines, which both ascertain his original performance of the part, and also render it probable that the words in question had reference to him:

"No more young Hamlet, though but *scant of breath*,
Shall cry 'Revenge!' for his dear father's death."

[34] This shows that Hamlet suspects what the King's *union* means.

Laer. My lord, I'll hit him now.
King. I do not think it.
Laer. [*Aside.*] And yet 'tis almost 'gainst my conscience.
Ham. Come, for the third, Laertes. You but dally:
I pray you, pass with your best violence;
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.[35]
Laer. Say you so? come on. [*They play.*
Osr. Nothing, neither way.
Laer. Have at you now!
[LAERTES *wounds* HAMLET; *then, in scuffling, they change Rapiers, and* HAMLET *wounds* LAERTES.[36]
King. Part them; they are incens'd.
Ham. Nay, come again. [*The Queen falls.*
Osr. Look to the Queen there, ho!
Hor. They bleed on both sides. — How is't, my lord?
Osr. How is't, Laertes?
Laer. Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric;
I'm justly kill'd with mine own treachery.
Ham. How does the Queen?
King. She swoons to see them bleed.
Queen. No, no, the drink, the drink, — O, my dear Hamlet,
The drink, the drink! I am poison'd! [*Dies.*
Ham. O villainy! — Ho! let the door be lock'd: —
Treachery! seek it out. [LAERTES *falls.*
Laer. It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain;
No medicine in the world can do thee good;
In thee there is not half an hour of life:
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenom'd. The foul practice
Hath turn'd itself on me: lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again. Thy mother's poison'd;
I can no more. The King, the King's to blame.
Ham. The point
Envenom'd too! — Then, venom, to thy work.
[*Stabs the King.*

[35] To make a wanton of a man, as the phrase is here used, is to treat him as a child, to avoid playing your best with him, or rather to play the game into his hands. — This is a quiet, but very significant stroke of delineation. Laertes is not playing his best, and it is the conscience of what is at the point of his foil that keeps him from doing so; and the effects are perceptible to Hamlet, though he dreams not of the reason.

[36] This exchanging of weapons, as commonly managed on the stage, has always seemed to me a very strained and awkward piece of business. The awkwardness is fairly removed in Mr. Edwin Booth's ordering of the matter. Hamlet there strikes the foil out of Laertes' hand, picks it up, and throws down his own, which, again, is presently picked up by Laertes. I think this might well be given in the stage-direction; nevertheless, I keep to the received form.

All. Treason! treason!
King. O, yet defend me, friends! I am but hurt.
Ham. Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,
Drink off this potion: — is thy union here?
Follow my mother. [*King dies.*
Laer. He is justly serv'd;
It is a poison temper'd by himself. —
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet:
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me! [*Dies.*
Ham. Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee. —
I'm dead, Horatio. — Wretched Queen, adieu! —
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time, (as this fell sergeant, Death,
Is strict in his arrest,) O, I could tell you —
But let it be. — Horatio, I am dead;
Thou liv'st: report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.
Hor. Never believe it:
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.
Here's yet some liquor left.
Ham. As thou'rt a man,
Give me the cup: let go; by Heaven, I'll have't.
O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. — [*March afar off, and Shot within.*
What warlike noise is this?
Osr. Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,
To the ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.
Ham. O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit:[37]
I cannot live to hear the news from England;
But I do prophesy th' election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice;
So tell him, with th' occurrents, more and less,
Which have solicited[38] — The rest is silence. [*Dies*

[37] To *overcrow* is to *overcome*, to *subdue*.
[38] *Occurrents* was much used in the Poet's time for *events* or *occurrences*. — *Solicited* is *prompted* or *excited*; as "this supernatural *soliciting*" in *Macbeth*. — "*More* and *less*" is *greater* and *smaller*; a common usage with the old writers.

Hor. Now cracks a noble heart:—Good night, sweet Prince;
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!—
Why does the drum come hither. [*March within.*

Enter FORTINBRAS, *the English Ambassadors, and Others.*

Fort. Where is this sight?
Hor. What is it ye would see?
If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.
Fort. This quarry cries on havoc.[39]—O proud Death,
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,
That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck?
1 *Amb.* The sight is dismal;
And our affairs from England come too late:
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,
To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd;
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.
Where should we have our thanks?
Hor. Not from his mouth,
Had it th' ability of life to thank you:
He never gave commandment for their death.
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,[40]
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
Are here arriv'd, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view;
And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world
How these things came about: so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts;
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters;
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause;[41]
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads: all this can I
Truly deliver.
Fort. Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune:
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,[42]
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

[39] To *cry on* was to *exclaim against*.— *Quarry* was the term used for a heap of slaughtered game.

[40] It has been already observed that *jump* and *just*, or *exactly*, are synonymous. See page 519, note 10.

[41] The phrase *put on* here means *instigated* or *set on foot*. *Cunning*, refers, apparently, to Hamlet's action touching "the packet," and *forc'd cause*, to the "compelling occasion," which moved him to that piece of practice.

[42] *Rights of memory* appears to mean rights founded in prescription or the order of inheritance.

Hor. Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more:[48]
But let this same be presently perform'd,
Even while men's minds are wild; lest more mischance,
On plots and errors, happen.
Fort. Let four captains
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;
For he was likely, had he been put on,
T' have prov'd most royally: and, for his passage,
The soldier's music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him. —
Take up the bodies. — Such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss. —
Go, bid the soldiers shoot. [*A dead March.*

[*Exeunt, marching; after which a Peal of Ordnance is shot off.*

[48] Whose vote will induce others to vote the same way. Horatio refers to Hamlet saying of Fortinbras, "he has my dying voice."

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